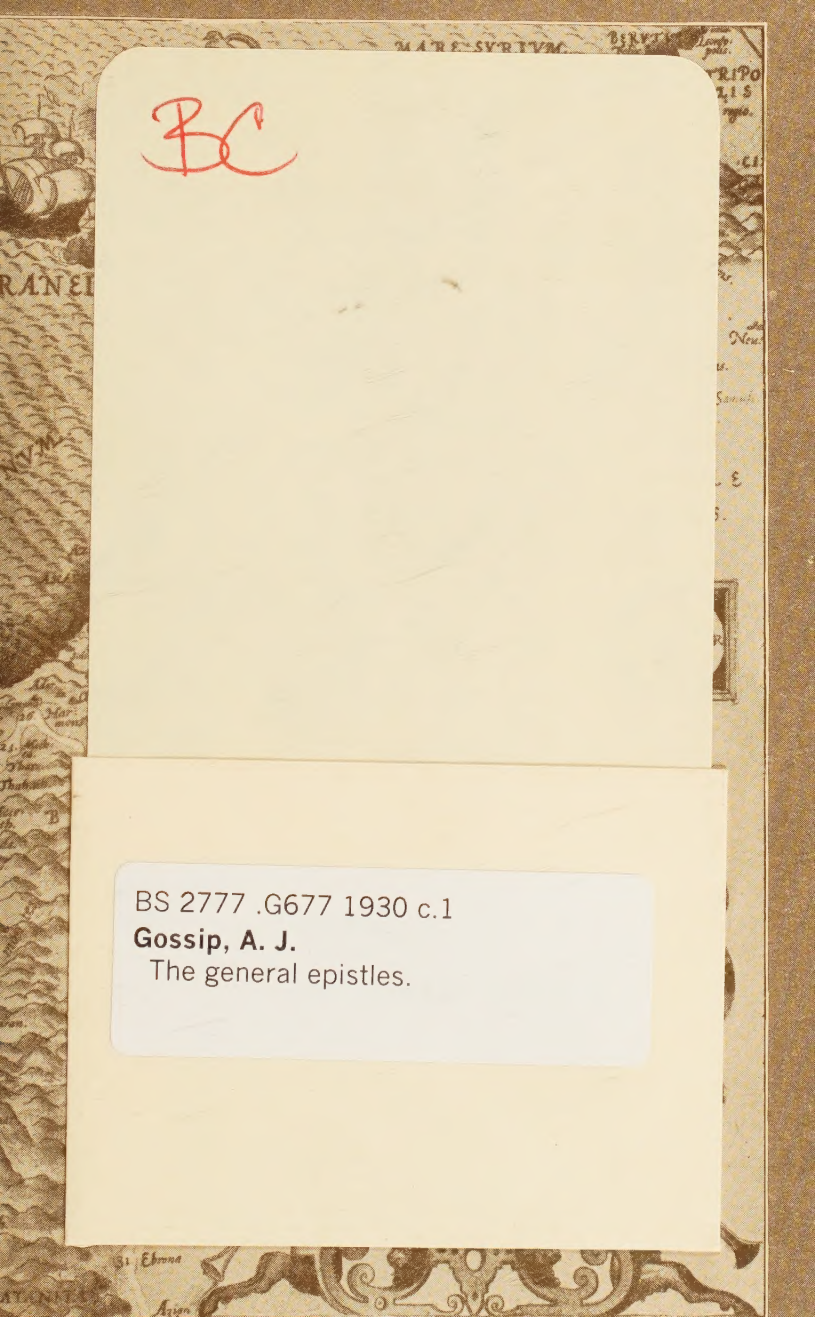
Antiquissimus
huius terræ appellatio
fuit Canaan, à filio Cham sic
dicto cuius fily eam veter sv dis
tribuerunt. Fuerunt autem in Sydon,
Hethæus, Iebuseus, Amorreus, Gergeseus,
et Hæmatheus, etc. Retinuit autem hæc ter
ra hoc nomen, donec Israelitæ posteritas
te Canaan partim ejecta, partim subacta eã
occuparunt: Inde regni nacam Israel à
Iacob patriarcha. Ptolomæus et alij eam
vocant Palæstinem à Palæstinis quos
Sacri libri Philistiim vocant
Hodie eam terrarum Sanc
tam nuncupant.
MARIS
MED
MARE AEGYPTIVM.
DELTA
PARVVM
DELTA
TVS.
MAG
NVM.
ARA
PE
SVR
DE
SERT
ITHAM
LITVDO.
Gosen
regio.
MARIS
RVBRI TARS



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The
Study
Bible

THE STUDY BIBLE

Editor JOHN STIRLING

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

A Little Library of Exposition

with

New Studies

by

A. J. GOSSIP, D.D.
Professor of Trinity College, Glasgow

J. F. McFADYEN, D.D.
Professor of Hislop College, Nagpur

CASSELL & COMPANY, LTD
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THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

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First published 1930

TO THE READER OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES

Although these little letters are in name General or Catholic, they possess for the modern reader the charm of a personal appeal. It may be because they are more practical than the theological and pastoral Epistles of the great Apostle, and in their counsel come closer to the everyday needs of ordinary people; or, because they claim to be the writings of our Lord's own brothers and His most beloved disciples. Whatever be the reason, the human interest is there. Men have turned to them, and will continue to turn to them, for those intimate thoughts upon life which are exchanged in conversation and correspondence between friends.

In this volume the circle of friendship is widened to include those who, in different parts of the world, have been drawn by these letters into the sacred fellowship, and who have passed on to others the fruits of their communion.

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An Appreciation

THE RELIGIOUS MESSAGE OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES FOR THE PRESENT DAY

BY

A. J. Gossip, D.D.

THE
FIRST
STUDY

The Rev. A. J. Gossip, D.D., is Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Training at Trinity College, Glasgow. Among his works are: *From the Edge of the Crowd*, *In Christ's Stead*, *The Galilean Ascent*, *The Hero in Thy Soul*.

THE RELIGIOUS MESSAGE OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES FOR THE PRESENT DAY

By A. J. Gossip, D.D.

IF the average man of to-day were a close student of the Scriptures, which unfortunately he is not, one of the places where his Bible would fall open of itself, at pages browned and yellowed by persistent use, would be the General or Catholic Epistles. For they have a way of underlining what he values in religion, what seems to him to be the essence of the thing, while leaving undeveloped and in shadow those other sides of it which, often enough, have been its primary appeal to other minds and other days, but which, somehow, leave him lost and puzzled, with an uncomfortable feeling that he has wandered out of his element into an alien world of foreign thoughts, among which he is not at home. For in religion as in other things there are fashions that come and go, sweeping the mass of us from one extreme out towards the other. Denney, for instance, held that for the moment the Church is gravely handicapped by the fact that its theology was formed in metaphysical generations, and designed for philosophical minds, whereas to-day men are not metaphysical nor philosophical, but, if not scientific, at least with eyes that look in that direction, and are interested there. And certainly most of the old disputes, debated with such heat and such high seriousness as if everything were trembling in the balances, seem to the ordinary person of to-day abstract, and queerly speculative, and far out from the centre of things. Even Paul's Epistles, which in other days have sometimes seemed at least, disastrously enough,

to have taken precedence in men's minds over the very Gospels—even these wonderful letters, with their deeps and their subtleties and their brave, audacious wrestlings with the final problems, leave many people cold, almost impatient; or at least with the feeling that, if this is Christianity, then obviously they have no aptitude for it, and, to be honest, not much interest in it; and they are on the point of flinging away when they come on such an one as James, a Christian no less certainly than that other, but of a different type; a man much closer to themselves, and with a mind that works more like their own, whose message they may find disturbingly challenging, but which they can and do understand.

For one thing, the man himself is arresting. It is one of the oddest things in literature that Paul's immensely vivid personality has somehow grown so blurred to many of his readers that, much as they pore over him, they just do not know him at all, and utterly misunderstand him. But James, unconsciously, has painted himself in colours that remain as fresh as the day they were first laid upon the canvas. Blunt, downright, practical, not greatly interested in the how and why of life, but keen to get something done about it now, and well aware that the most of us can think only in pictures, he flames out what he has to say in unforgettable metaphors that burn into the memory. Ruskin held that the biggest thing a man can do is to see something, and make others see it. James always sees, is looking straight at what he is describing, and to us also it grows real and there. Is there not something Hogarth-like, for instance, in the cruel lifelikeness of that fierce little sketch of a Christian gathering up some back street, where the usual handful are assem-

bling, and a new face or two drift in ; but, as a glance shows, only slaves or seamen or the like, and so shoved anywhere : and then that flutter of excitement at the door, and pleased officials bustling to and fro, escorting a rich stranger to the place, whose influence might tell, to an important seat. That is a gibe which even yet is not quite out of date. For let some novelist or scientist be pleased to drop a half assent to some Christian dogma, and what a noisy cackling there breaks forth, as if these excited people felt that, with such a patron backing Him, Christ has a chance at last, whereas, more seemlily, the Romanists receive the most outstanding convert with a well-bred calm, as if to say, " Well for him that he has come in, but God's cause does not hang upon what he may do ; was certain to prevail in any case." Such vivid touches abound everywhere.

Moreover, to use his own phrase, this is a man of like passions as ourselves. All great preaching is auto-biographic : and when he talks of anger, it is clear where the pinch lies for him ; and when he blazes out on the sins of the tongue, his own besetting enemy stands there plainly revealed. There is a singularly rich and haunting literature upon that subject : old likeable Plutarch steeling himself against one of his own infirmities ; and Butler, startled for once out of his reserve by his amazement at this universal " itch for talking," which, for lack of other matter, soon lands most of us in the disease of character-giving and the like ; and Law, watching the whisperers, upon the flimsiest evidence, handing on tales that shatter reputations, with no dislike of anybody in their hearts, but just to keep a conversation going, and always murmuring that they hope it is not true ; and Bengel, condensing, as is his wont, whole tomes into a short crisp phrase,

" Judge not, without knowledge, without necessity, and without love "—a law that would rule out how much malicious chattering—and many more. But no one of them all feels such sheer bewilderment over it as James, who has found himself rising from real heartfelt communion with God and almost the next moment speaking woundingly, or such a sense of helplessness about it—for everything, even the most unlikely and the fiercest ; he cries distractedly, can be tamed, and has been tamed, except this riotous member that won't brook restraint, but bursts through all your barriers, however sturdily constructed—or such a shuddering loathing of it. It is the very fire of hell, he cries, what makes hell hell, and it is blazing within me, and sparks of it keep flying forth, causing such heartache and such ruin ! No one is religious at all, so he roundly declares, who is not mastering his tongue ; thereby revealing his own sore. For as Newman has it, it is a simple matter to keep God's law in ninety-nine points ; but the real test is the hundredth, where it is not easy. That is the battle-ground for you, where you must prove your loyalty and manhood.

Yet there is not a hint of fear in James's eyes. Rather " the especial marking of the man " is the characteristic New Testament gallantry, and that in a conspicuous degree. One of his favourite words is " steadfast," and another is " endure." And he himself faces life at its bleakest and most dangerous, with his head up, and pulses beating never a shade faster. He does not often speak of the beliefs that made him, but sometimes we do catch a glimpse of the hill country where his force of character had its rise, and gained its rush. Prayer he has proved to be a mighty force that works ; and it lies always ready to one's hand. And he serves a great

God : witness that wonderful metaphor of the hush of high noon with the sunshine flooding every chink and cranny in a shadowless splendour of warmth and golden glory—so God too is always at His zenith, giving all He has and all He is in an immeasurable and unstinted liberality. This is a man who knows he has immense resources at his back. Yet in himself there is the fierce joy of the fighter, who exults, not in the victory alone, but in the struggle also. If trials come, let us be thankful, so he argues boldly, for are not trials clear evidence that God has not lost faith in us, but after all our failure still believes in us, is proving that by granting us this other opportunity. Let us rise up like men, and seize it, growing stronger through the discipline of life, as trees root themselves deeper and stand firmer because of the howling of the blasts. That is to say, that whereas we whimper and fret over life's discipline, or, broken in spirit by innumerable overthrows, are apt to define temptation as yet another likelihood of sinning, and so watch its coming with scared eyes, James hails it as another chance of winning, and of breaking free, and of climbing up and up to better things.

Without sorrow and pain and struggle, so he feels, we would grow bovine, flabby, otiose. But these may make real men of us.

> " Why comes Temptation but for man to meet
> And master, and make crouch beneath his feet,
> And so be pedestaled in triumph. Pray
> 'Lead us not into temptation, Lord.'
> Yea, but O Thou whose servants are the bold,
> Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
> Reluctant dragons, to who dare fight,
> That so he may do battle, and have praise!"

Yet he is no less sane than he is valiant ; is well aware that, in great degree, we make our own temptations.

Everyone knows à Kempis's careful analysis—how first there comes a bare suggestion of evil, then dwelling on it, followed by a strong imagination, and delight, and evil motion, and consent ; and with that yet another sin has soiled our soul. That is accurate psychology, but it gives us no indication whence that first bare suggestion blew into the mind. It comes, that is enough for him ; and the all-important point in practice is what do you do, once it has come. " I am so busy with things in the middle," said Goethe, " that I have no time for the origins or for the ends." James also does not deal much with the ultimate beginnings, but he too is vehemently sure that the real plague-spot lies within : that just as a healthy body can move through this earth of ours full of malignant germs, and be no whit the worse for them, so a healthy soul might walk this dangerous world and be immune to sin. It is something wrong within that causes moral sickness and disease and spiritual death, something that can, and must, be righted there. Then, as now, many were whimpering peevishly that it wasn't their fault : that they had never had a chance ! Why was there evil in the world at all ? Why were they given this impossible enemy to combat ? If things went wrong it was God's blame, and all due to His muddled ordering of things. That is a modern and familiar note. Just so men are excusing themselves now, persuading themselves that sin is no great matter, at the worst an uncomfortable childish ailment that we shall outgrow—no more. The processes of evolution, so we airily explain, are very incomplete thus far, and so the ape and tiger have not quite died out in us as yet, through no fault of our own, but simply because we have happened to appear too early in the centuries for that. The sins of our rude forefathers are roaring through

our veins and keep rushing our wills. Well, after all, we didn't choose them, can't be held responsible. The nature given to us is a rough-and-ready and makeshift affair, ingrainedly earthy and selfish, and not really workable into holiness; and God cannot expect impossibilities from us. We are set down in an environment where nothing clean can live, or at least mature and fruit. And it was God, not we, who set us there; God who, so setting us, must have known what was bound to happen. In short, like those unfortunates whom Dante saw in hell, "God and their parents they blasphemed, the place, the time, the race, the human kind, that did engender them," anything, anyone, everything except themselves.

There are facts there, of course, that must be faced. The New Testament is the last book in the world to shirk them, or deny that we start with a handicap against us, with a vitiated nature, and the sins of former generations weighting us down. These things now heralded as new discoveries that rule it out are commonplaces in it, and some of the axioms on which its teaching rests. Yet it is very sure that through the grace of God we, each one of us, can stand up upon our feet, and play the man, and win, in spite of every handicap; and that, if we do not, the flaw lies in ourselves. Buddha, in a tremendous picture of the Judgment, makes the unhappy sinners there be forced to confess that it was not their parents' fault, nor any other necessity laid on them, that brought them to that evil plight, but their own failure and deliberate choice. And James too emphasises that. It is not God who tempts, but we are drawn away by our own insane desires, and madly follow them, yes, on to our own ruin.

That has never been popular teaching and is not

so now! Many of the more earnest spirits among us, all on fire to help their fellows, just flatly deny it. Hence the Social gospel, or at least the concentrating upon that alone; for, as we shall see, nobody speaks more vehemently on these points than James himself. People have never had a chance, so runs the confident argument. Change their environment, and you change them, and the new world will break in with a rush. Thoughtful reformers of course do not credit that, stated in that crude way. Reform, says Ramsay MacDonald, does not begin with the nation, or with the family, but with the individual, and unless you can change him, your schemes must fail. And Mr. Baldwin, scoffing at the notion that Christianity has completed its work, declares it has hardly begun, and that the Kingdom can come in only by creating in increasing numbers individual souls so clean and true that they will shame the rest of us, and lift us up nearer themselves. But then there are not many thoughtful people in the world, and the most of us these days are certain that some swift external revolution, economic or political, you and I still remaining what we are, will bring in the new earth where all evils will be healed and righteousness will dwell. And nobody agrees with Paul that law is far too weak a thing to manage this tremendous business for us, and that what is mainly needed is a new heart in ourselves. Mr. Urwicke, in a telling passage in his *Social Good*, declares that the reformers of our day fill him with a grave uneasiness; they are so certain that some external change is all that is required, are so unconscious of anything wrong in themselves, whereas he knows that in any environment, so long as he remains only what he is now, he will continue morally to make a mess of things. They

seem to be so much better than I, he plaintively complains, these eager, confident men who feel no such disability in themselves, and declares that he can get a bite of hope from no one but Dean Inge, who is not ashamed, he thankfully remarks, to confess that "he too, like me, is a bad man inside." James would hold that he is not worse than are these others, but only clearer sighted and more accurate in diagnosis than they are. And, whether it be popular or no these days, the Church has got to hold to that grim reading of the case.

And so for James religion is a bluntly practical affair. Many to-day are suspicious of organised religion. They feel it talks too much, and does too little, losing itself in a barren emotion and mere words that end as words. And James, too, seems a little shy of it, and for that same reason. He has seen so many hypnotising themselves into the belief that they were what they simply were not, but only continually agreeing it were well to be, and that some day they must really set about it, but meanwhile in hard fact remaining just like other folk. One can pray with fervour, yet be no whit the better for it; one can have faith—even the devils possess that, yet remain devils; one can mistake a vapid amiability for the self-sacrificing love Christ claims, that acts and gives and spends itself ungrudgingly. If it comes to faith, surely this man who, as a child, had knelt at the same mother's knee with Christ, and learned his baby prayers beside Him, and slept in the same room for years, and played with Him at the same infant games, offered, at last, the most amazing faith this world has ever seen. Yet James's standard is our modern standard, and his test our modern test. Is it efficient? Does it work? What comes of it? Show us your results!

If you have none, then what you call your faith is valueless, and you are wasting strength and time. Paul too, of course, says that over and over, but somehow not so dramatically, and the world to-day is not Pauline but Jacobean ; is downright, simple, perhaps too simple, eager to get on with the job. Like Buddha with the man struck by a poisoned arrow who would not pull it out, but stood discussing the wood of which it was fashioned, and the bird from which the feathers came that winged it, and the colour of the hair of the man who shot it, and irrelevancies of that kind, while the poison soaked into his system, so, rightly or wrongly, folk to-day grow irritated over theological problems as a waste of precious time. Here am I, they break in impatiently, can you make a man of me ? Here are my needy fellows, can you help me to help them ? Here is this great uneasy sinful world, can you show me how to lift it up out of the mud and cleanse it ? If so, get on, get on, and don't stand talking. And if not, then out of the way !

And so, if you ask James for a definition of religion, the man's eyes cloud a little. He is back, I think, in the old home, where he was thought to be the spiritual member of the family, he, one of a strict religious order, and with the arrangements of the house proudly and rigidly regulated to suit his religious exercises and his prayers, and his fasts, and his general convenience. Whereas none of them seem to have thought Jesus to be specially religious. I lived in the same house with Him for years and years, and never recognised religion at its highest being lived out there before my eyes, he cries remorsefully. " Pure religion and undefiled," what is it but what I saw Him doing day by day, keeping Himself unspotted from the world, and spend-

ing Himself eagerly for any soul with never a claim on Him at all. That is the thing itself—and all else, your prayers, and your hopes, and your faith, are but helps to it. And you and I, if we are to have any claim to be really religious, must grow like Him, must spend life in His fashion, must put on His ways, must adopt, aye and live out His own tremendous standard for us, urged upon us over and over and over again. "As I, so you." For nothing less will do.

As I, so you, and with that there is back on us again that Social gospel which, in its own place, you cannot keep out. For religion is not a department added to life : it is a way of living life in all its departments. And you must carry the new Christlike spirit into your citizenship, your business, your wage earning, everything. James scoffs, in words that burn and blister to this day, at people claiming to be religious whose unneeded gold is rusting in a world of folk always upon the very verge of sheer despair, or who defraud those they employ out of their just rights and fair share in life. It has taken a long time for the modern Church to feel something of his passion of anger over things like these ; and it is paying for its apathy in the loss of many whom it failed to help in desperate straits. But, thank God, it has awakened, and is rising to its feet ; and who can tell what may not happen if, at last, Christ's laws are really to be taken seriously, and lived out.

That, then, is the mind and attitude of a typical early Christian. Harnack and others have pointed out that Paul has a far bigger place in the New Testament than he held in the early Church. For the mass of these first believers were not spiritual geniuses like him, but just plain folk. Read the subapostolic writings, and one is conscious of disappointment. They seem to

understand their faith so ill, to miss the thrill of it, to overlook all that seems greatest and most central in it to a man like Paul ; but they do feel this is a way of life worth living, are quite sure this is a cause worth working, living, dying for, and did it, in their simple, crude, untheological way. And if to-day others, who feel that there is much in Christianity they do not understand, can make a similar offering, be sure that Christ will take it gladly at their hands. Such people might begin with James. For Luther's " Epistle of Straw " is of enormous value to us all these days, is the nearest door through which many can enter in.

Yet what he says is not the idiosyncrasy of an individual. Very far from that. Take the Johannine Epistles ! The Second and Third, interesting though they are—Streeter thinks them, for the historian, of " unique importance " even in the New Testament —do not add much to the religious message of the Testament ; but the first is strikingly original. Yet in its own way, a more theological way, it rings out just that same note of a blunt practicality, with a hammering reiteration, and a grave and sobering solemnity. For the writer, whoever he was—we have nothing to do with critical problems—is by far the sternest writer in the Testament. Dante tells us that at one place in his journeyings through the Beyond he was examined by Peter on Faith, and by James on Hope, and by John on Love. I could face Peter with some equanimity, for he is a kindly, understanding soul. But John would fluster me into a panic. He is so curt, and brusque, and critical, and almost truculent. Time and again he pulls us up and asks, " Why do you call yourself a Christian ? " And when we answer, " Because we have

some love to Jesus Christ," "Let me see it," he says, and takes it in his hands, and turns it round, and examines it—and "Mere emotion!" he decides, "Nothing in it," and so tosses it away. And indeed, when he has done with it, it does look tashed and shabby and a poor affair. All which is admirable for us beyond doubt, a right health-giving tonic; but with a distinct tartness of taste. John is so fierce with us, so unbelieving in the reality of our professions, so frankly critical of our claims. "Liars" and "lying" are words that he keeps flinging about. And he is plainly doubtful whether there is any substance at all in our so-called discipleship.

The tests he sets for us are both drastic and thorough. And first, of course, there is our attitude to Jesus Christ. If we can meet Him and ignore Him, if our souls do not bow down before Him in a reverence which is not simply reverence but worship, if the revelation He brings of what life can be does not storm and captivate our hearts, if we can keep out of the glory of the adventure that He offers us, then we are self-condemned as mean and dull and stunted souls. To John belief in Christ is something much more than mere intellectual assent. In the Upper Room the Master gave us moving definitions of what He means by friendship and affection. And the disciple also warns us that many think that they love, when in point of fact they only like to be loved, a very splendid thing, but still a very different matter. Really to love Christ is a passion, an enthusiasm, that keeps and can keep nothing back, because it is not ours but His, and we would rather use it for Him than upon ourselves. And how? One thing is very clear to John, that such an affection will scunner us even of our favourite

sins, make them impossible, force us to lose taste for them, give us the strength to rise up and to fling them forth. As certainly as light and darkness cannot both be in the same spot at once, so nobody can walk abreast with Christ and even one known and deliberate sin. The thing cannot be done, he cries. And if you claim that you are doing it, I don't believe you, he says bluntly. We may stumble and fall, for we are frail and foolish ; and the best among us need a Saviour. If we have not realised that, we know nothing of ourselves, and little about Jesus Christ. But where Christ is, sin dies. There is a test for you, he says ; one way in which you can make sure if you are really His, or no.

But what is asked of us is not simply a negative thing, a not doing this, a not being that, but a passion of the heart that, bewildered by God's love to us, cannot keep from loving One so lovable, from throwing away in His service all we have and all we are, feeling that to do anything else with it were to squander and waste it, and to shame ourselves. Having seen how God loves us, what can we do but live for Him, work for Him, die for Him ? And one obvious way in which we can do that is to spend ourselves for those about us. For, as Christ said, all needy people are His representatives, and what we do to them He will accept as if done to His very self ; and, adds John, every one who loves the Father, loves the sons born of that Father. There, again, is an absolute way in which you can discover whether you are God's children or not. Only we must be really doing something, and not just dreaming about it, and agreeing something should be done. While the rest of the household were busying themselves eagerly for poor Jo, shivering and ragged, starved and ill, Harold Skimpole sat at the piano, and with tears

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

in his voice, composed and sang a little ballad about befriending an outcast boy. That didn't really help much, although he himself felt immeasurably charitable, and much moved. And, like many impatient spirits in our midst to-day, John thinks the Church is too apt to content itself with sentimentalities that flicker out with little or no practical results. " Let us put our love, not into words or talk, but into deeds, and make it real." For that word " real " too is a favourite of his. Again the modern standard of efficiency, of getting something done, of not keeping out of things like the priest and the Levite. Back again, surely, to the social gospel among other things. For if he is suspicious of many claimants to Christianity, that is because he knows and has experienced in his own life and character that Christ is a tremendous power that does with ease what had always been impossible ; and therefore, if there are no such happenings in your life or mine, what can he do except conclude that we are not really using this tremendous thing at all ?

It is a marvellous life, so he has found, into which Christ leads us. How he exults in it ; its newness and its fullness, and its riches, and its power ; and all that here and now ! There are, indeed, wonderful dreams ahead that will come true in time, but already what do we not owe our Lord ! Those to whom he writes have, he assumes, received how many glorious things, if they are really Christ's at all. They are God's children ; their sins are forgiven ; they have overcome the evil one ; they are the world's conquerors ; they cannot sin, because of that new nature given to them, and because " He who is born of God preserves them " ; they " know " (that also is a word he uses constantly)—they know the real God, and how glorious

He is ; and the real life (while others chase will-o'-the-wisps), and have the power to live it out. Of all this he is sure. It is no carried story, no mere rumour blowing to and fro which he has heard and passes on for what it may be worth. He guarantees it. It is first-hand evidence, he says. We heard, we saw, we know, and have experienced, so he declares.

That is the note which the Church must recapture if it is to win the world. For as the Master of Balliol says, the preacher's business is not to argue but to hand on an experience. It is no use, this endless whimpering about the Church's failure. Rather let us ring out the story of the Master's power : aye, and why should we not ? For if we really know Him, we have, and must have, our own personal evidences which there is no refuting ; can tell how He saved us—not people long ago, but us—healed us, taught us, brought us what we required ; can look men in the eyes and tell them that they need not scramble on in the old shambling, faltering, stumbling way. For we have found the power that they require, have proved it, guarantee it works, we speaking to them now, for we have tried it in our life and character, and know.

How, then, are men to gain and keep this power ? For that, turn to the Petrine Epistles. It is not my function here to enter upon critical questions of author-ship and the like, but to deal with the religious message for the present day of these epistles, as they lie before us. Enough to say, whoever may have written Second Peter, or, for that matter, the First Epistle either, it is not casually that these two letters (to me among the most exquisite things even in the New Testament) have been conjoined. Indeed it is a phrase in the

second, a phrase used more than once, which seems to me to give the key-note of them both. Most people, it is true, will tell you Paul for faith, and John for love, and Peter for hope. And, indeed, these letters are full of those huge, audacious New Testament hopes that take away the breath. Aquinas, after dealing with the intellectual and moral virtues and the like, comes upon three which he feels to be more specifically Christian, and one of them is hope, because, says he, the hopes the gospel sets before us are so tremendous, that, on the face of it, Divine grace must be absolutely needed if we are ever to approach anywhere near to them. And surely that is true.

What utterly amazing things these men claim calmly and as matters of course! What staggering dreams they harbour for us ordinary men, with no special spiritual aptitudes! What hungry and illimitable ambitions they set before us as our goals! John talks of "having confidence" at that awesome moment when our lives are being weighed and judged. And Jude in that fierce little epistle (about which it is perhaps enough to say that, if it is by our Lord's brother, what an astounding family they were gathered beneath that humble roof) prays, evidently with every expectation of a complete answer, that those to whom he writes may stand "faultless" before the awful holiness of God, with nothing in them that He, at that stage, could wish away! But nowhere, even in the Testament, do faces lighten, and hands leap out, and hearts look forward with a quieter and more complete assurance to the wonders that are bound to come, or souls pay down the full price that may be required for them more boldly, than in the Petrine Epistles. Our life, as Christian people, so they say,

is no drab affair, but full of colour, and a happy excitement, and a standing upon tiptoe watching for the splendours that we know are on the way. We, you and I, are to become partakers of the Divine nature! Out of this sorry stuff of our personality, that is to be fashioned. We, you and I, possess "an unfading inheritance," or as good as possess it even now, for it is being "kept" for us by God's own hands, and we are being "kept" for it by God's own power. And so we have a double security.

Already, indeed, it is coming true. We are an "elect people, the royal priesthood, the consecrated nation, the people who belong to Him," possess a life not to be compared to the dull nothings which is all that other poor souls know. Think of this earth spinning in the primeval darkness, a dead thing; and how, when through the mists that first light fell on it, and grew into the splendour of the sunshine, there came to it colour, beauty, interest, life, everything that makes this glorious world of ours! Such is the difference that Christ has made to us. He "called us out of darkness, into His marvellous light." And yet all this we have is but "a taste of the Lord's kindness" which, so far from exhausting the Divine liberality toward us, is but a preface, a first introduction to all that He has in His heart for us. And so these people face what looks to us their bleak and difficult lives with a queer equanimity and a very real content. Knocked about and mishandled, "It is our vocation," they say, to do good to those who are unjust to us, to be a blessing to others who have not one thought to spare for us. The aim and end and purpose of a Christian man is, not to keep thinking of what will best suit him, but how he can serve the community, even if it treats him with grave injustice

and spurning. That is a bold philosophy of life. Yet I wonder if all our clamour about rights, and all this noisy clashing of class war, is really wiser and saner and bigger than that; and if our limiting, not of our interests alone, but even of our endeavours to help our fellows, to these swift seventy years, while leaving the eternities beyond a dim and vague affair that we will chance, is not dwarfing us as a race to mere ephemerids, we who are born immortal spirits who can never die!

But to me the outstanding thing in these epistles is that key phrase, "I stir you up by the way of remembrance." For that is literally true. They do. Peter does not argue much. Rather, faced by some moral problem, he flashes a vision of Jesus Christ before the mind, and says no more, leaving Him to make His own appeal. When the younger men, and indeed the whole community, strike him as somewhat pushful and over-ambitious, he does not rail at them, nor complain, nor protest, but simply says, "put on the apron of humility," quite obviously back in the Upper Room among that angry group of irritated men, seeing Christ rise and gird Himself with a towel, beginning with a reddening face to take in what He proposed to do, watching Him drawing nearer and still nearer, with a sick dismay, feeling the agony of that touch on his soiled feet, hearing that quiet voice, "I have been giving you an example that you should do what I have done to you." And is not Peter right? What could pierce our pride, and shame us into seemliness, as that sudden reminder does? Or, the elders in the church are growing slack, and Peter drops a single phrase, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear." And, face to face with that good Shepherd, who gives His whole life for the sheep, and will not lose one of His flock, but follows it through all its wayward wanderings

until He finds it, careless of the cost to Himself, how shabby and unworthy their own efforts look, though but a moment since they had thought them quite adequate, and all that could be reasonably asked of anyone. Or, there were men with a grievance, a just grievance, as we judge. They were not whining, they explained, knew they were far from perfect, and were quite prepared to face the consequences of their own slips and mistakes. But this was something very different, the unbearable surliness of utterly unreasonable people who were giving them no chance, grossly denying them that barest justice which is a human birthright. And Peter does not argue their particular case, but of a sudden they are looking at Christ staggering beneath His cross to Calvary upon His way to die, " the just for the unjust." And with that, somehow, their own grievance, which had filled their universe, has shrunk into a vastly lesser thing. So it is always. Paul for faith, and John for love, but Peter for remembrance. Keep within sight of Christ, and let His influence tell upon you, and allow nothing to break your fellowship with Him, and all the rest must follow, so he holds. And beyond question that is the real way to preach, and we had better get back to it. This outcry against theological preaching has been vastly overdone. No doubt, if you are doctrinaire and abstract, nobody will listen to you long. But they want you to talk of Jesus Christ, need you to talk of Jesus Christ, and in their hearts of hearts despise you if you waste your chance chattering to them about anything else. At the front my experience was happily different from that which many others tell us fell to them, in bleatings which seem to me ugly libels of the boys who died for us. I did not find this universal alienation from the

Church, of which so many whimper; and I came on almost no one who was not impressed and awed and moved by Jesus Christ. "What shall I preach about to-day?" I used to ask; and if they replied at all, always there came back the answer, "Tell us something about Jesus Christ!" Never was that more needed than to-day. For the most pressing danger is not even that many are openly revolting from the Christian ethic, from Christ's axioms, as from weak, mushy sentimentalism that won't work out in the real jostle of life, but that many others who accept these, vainly imagine they can work them out without Him. "Yes, they say, we must love our fellows, must forget ourselves, must live as brothers. So let us rise up, and do it." But we can't, without the example, and the inspiration, and the help of Christ. And it is that Christ we must give them. Up in the north there is a little country church in which the entering minister is faced by this wistful inscription, "Sir, we would see Jesus." That is our part—to let them see Him who will shame them out of being only what they are, and make them long for better things, and best of all give them the power to reach them. And may God have mercy on us, if we are forgetting that!

The Epistle of James may be called the Epistle of Equality.—Père Gratry.

To Peter objective truth was the main thing; subjective struggles between the intellect and spiritual consciousness, such as we find in Paul, and the intuitions of a spirit absorbed in contemplation like that of John, though not by any means alien to Peter, were in him wholly subordinated to the practical tendencies of a simple and energetic character.—F. C. Cook.

To no age since his own has John had more to say than to ours; the opening of the twentieth century is, in some ways, wonderfully near to the close of the first.

G. G. Findlay.

Jude wrote an Epistle of but few verses, yet filled with vigorous words of heavenly grace.—Origen.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Drawn from many sources to illustrate the great Texts and Teaching of the Books

THE
SECOND
STUDY

THESE EPISTLES have not received from Christian scholarship anything like the amount of study which has been given to the other books of the New Testament. The reason is simple. They are brief, and consequently do not offer the same scope for analysis and exposition. They are, speaking generally, not doctrinal, and when the Church was concerned with the discussion of vital theological questions their voice was not heard. JAMES was perhaps an exception, but only because he seemed to contradict Paul on the subject of Faith. It has been suggested that it was this apparent contradiction which delayed the acceptance by the Church of this Epistle to Scripture rank. There also seems to have been a doubt in the early centuries as to whether JUDE, 2 PETER, 2 and 3 JOHN should be included in the Canon. They are unlike the other sacred writings and do not contribute to the extent of 1 JOHN and 1 PETER to our knowledge of the Christian Revelation. With these two letters the position is different. From the first they have been accepted as valuable Christian documents, which the Church could not afford to lose, largely perhaps because of the doctrinal truths they simply express, but also for the direct guidance they offer to all who would walk in the light. It is in these practical counsels that we find the common note of this group of epistles. Hence our Notes and Comments are more practical than doctrinal, and are drawn as much from preachers as from commentators.

Here and there throughout the volume quotation has been made from secular works which seemed to offer illumination to the sacred text.

JAMES

GREETING

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting.
Jas. I. 1.

A GREEK salutation—literally, "wisheth joy"; whereas the other Epistles wish "mercy," "grace," "peace," the last being the prevalent Eastern form, even to the present day. The co-ordinate mention of God and the Lord Jesus Christ implies their co-equal dignity; and it accords with St. James's view of the oneness of the old and new Dispensations.—R. SCOTT.

Austere and frequently ironical in tone, aphoristic in form, pregnant in expression, the successive paragraphs resemble more than once the sentences in Bacon's essays. They are brief, condensed, direct. . . . He has affinities with the stubborn and pungent realism of Amos.—J. MOFFATT.

The main object of St. James is not to teach doctrine, but to improve morality. He is the moral teacher of the New Testament. Warnings and consolations are mixed together, for the writer does not seem to have set himself down to compose an essay or a letter of which he had previously arranged the heads; but, like one of the old prophets, to have poured out what was uppermost in his thoughts, or closest to his heart, without waiting to connect his matter, or to throw bridges across from subject to subject. While, in the purity of his Greek and the vigour of his thoughts, we mark a man of education, in the abruptness of his transitions and the unpolished roughness of his style we may trace one of the family of the Davideans, who disarmed Domitian by the simplicity of their minds and by exhibiting their hands hard with toil.—F. MEYRICK.

THE PROOF OF FAITH

THE MINISTRY OF TRIAL

Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience.

Jas. I. 2–3.

THIS does not mean that we are at liberty to *run* into temptation.

Bp. WORDSWORTH.

Patience must not be an inch shorter than the affliction. If the bridge reach but half-way over the brook, we shall have but ill-favoured passage.—J. TRAPP.

The patience which rejoices is perfect.—BENGEL.

Temptations are of two kinds: (1) such as lead to sin, which the lusts of the flesh and the love of riches produce in us (1 Tim. vi. 9), against these our Lord instructs us to pray, that we enter not into them, and of these the Apostle begins to discourse, ver. 13; (2) such as are sent for the trial of our constancy and sincerity in the faith; and to our patience and perseverance under these is promised a great reward in heaven: and of these the Apostle speaks here and ver. 12.

ŒCUMENIUS.

Temptations are not scattered all about us without a purpose. And if it is true on the one side that we have no right to run into temptations, so is it true on the other hand that temptations are the necessary discipline of our lives.—F. TEMPLE.

Evils are better borne when we *fall into them* rather than *draw them* upon ourselves. We lose the comfort of sufferings when there is guilt in them.—T. MANTON.

Temptation puts to the test. Trials sent by God do this. A test is never employed for the purpose of injury. A weight is attached to a rope, not to break but to prove it. Pressure is applied to a boiler, not to burst

it, but to certify its power of resistance. The testing process here confers no strength. But when a sailor has to navigate his ship under a heavy gale and in a difficult channel, skill and courage are not only tested but improved. The test has brought experience, and by practice is every faculty perfected. So, faith grows stronger by exercise, and patience by the enduring of sorrow.—NEWMAN HALL.

Though no combatant be near, though the deep be calm and clear, a wary warrior is ever on his guard, the wary pilot is never asleep : even in peace and in calm he prepares his arms, trims his sail, ready, whatever chance presents itself, to meet the battle or the gale.

METASTASIO.

The best ground untilled soonest runs out rank weeds. Such are God's children, overgrown with security ere they are aware, unless they be well exercised, both with God's plough of affliction and their own industry of meditation.—J. HALL.

He is not drowning His sheep when He washeth them, nor killing them when He is shearing them. But by this He showeth that they are His own ; and the new-shorn sheep do most visibly bear His name or mark, when it is almost worn out, and scarce discernible, on them that have the longest fleece.—BAXTER.

Count each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee : do thou
With courtesy receive him ; rise and bow ;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave ;
Then lay before him all thy heart ; allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality.—AUBREY DE VERE.

THE SOURCE OF TRUE WISDOM

If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting.

Jas. I. 5–6.

THE wise man is he who apprehends laws and purposes in nature and life, in contrast with the fool who is the slave of his senses and of the moment.—A. R. WHITHAM.

Wisdom is a right judgment of our afflictions, of our duties, and of our spiritual benefits.—DIODATI.

The true wisdom is the wisdom of Jesus, who placed the true good in the inner life.—G. B. STEVENS.

The true wisdom of a Christian is to know how to suffer; but this wisdom is a gift of God, and this gift a fruit of prayer.—QUESNEL.

Prayer is the key of heaven, and faith is the hand that turns it.—T. WATSON.

Even among those who pray regularly, the prayer for wisdom does not, I suspect, form a part of their petitions. Many of us seem to have a confused notion that sense, reason, good judgment, or by whatever name we call our intellectual faculties, are quite distinct from spiritual blessings, and are things too worldly to be named in our prayers. Yet what was Solomon's choice but "an understanding heart to judge the people"? that is, a mind capable of discerning the truth and the right in the line of his daily duty.

T. ARNOLD.

God gives fully and directly, and reproacheth not the utterance of a prayer for wisdom, in no way detracting from the graciousness of His gifts. How wide the differences from the generosity of man.

E. G. PUNCHARD.

THE BEATITUDE OF ENDURANCE

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord *promised to them that love him.*

Jas. I. 12.

THE crown *is* life eternal—that life which we know, which is glorious and eternal. No image derived from *athletes* must be thought of in the verse, as is done by many: such an image would be foreign to the ideas of the Jews, with whom the receiving a crown from God was a familiar image, irrespective of any previous contest for a prize. (Cf. Ps. xxi. 3.)—H. ALFORD.

To overcome temptation, not in outer act merely, but with heart and soul, that is what wins the crown of life; the crown emphatically of life, for he who has passed through temptations victorious, he it is who emphatically lives.—F. TEMPLE.

Observe the contrast with verse 10 where the rich man is described as a fading flower, withered by the sun; but he who stands the scorching heat of trial shall receive the crown of life which never fadeth. Earthly trials are the flowers of which the heavenly garland is made.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

His enduring proves his love, for it is only love that "endureth all things."—J. WESLEY.

God gives strength to bear a great deal, if we only strive ourselves to endure.—HANS ANDERSEN.

Not in the achievement, but in the endurance of the human soul, does it show its Divine grandeur and its alliance with the infinite God.—A. CHAPIN.

To be able to endure is the first lesson which a child ought to learn, and the one which it will have the most need to know.—ROUSSEAU.

THE GENESIS OF MORAL EVIL

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.

Jas. I. 13–15.

GOD is not tempted with evil, and He doth not tempt to evil. Ascribe it not to the Father of Light, but to the Prince of Darkness. But ascribe all good, from the smallest spark to the greatest beam, from the least "good giving" to the best and most perfect gift of all, to Him, the Author of all good.

BP. ANDREWES.

Here James treats of those inordinate appetites which incite us to transgression, and with great justice denies God to be the author of these. Nothing is more common among mankind than to transfer to others the blame of the evils which they themselves have done; and especially do they think themselves most free from blame if they can turn it upon God. This artifice, handed down to us from the first man, we are too careful to imitate. For this reason James calls upon each of us to confess his own guilt, and not to lay the charge upon God, as if He tempted us to sin.

CALVIN.

When the mind has sinned and removed itself far from virtue, it lays the blame on Divine causes, attributing to God its own change. Of no secret, treacherous, and deliberate crime is it proper to say that it was done by the will of God; they are done by our own will. For in ourselves are the treasuries of evil, but with God the treasuries of good things only.—PHILO.

EVERY GOOD GIFT

Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.

Jas. I. 17.

"VARIATION" denotes a change in the understanding; "turning" a change in the will. In each word there is a metaphor taken from the stars, and used with singular propriety in this passage, where mention is made of *lights*. Variation and turning occur in nature, which has a daily vicissitude of day and night, and has at one time a greater length of day, at another time a greater length of night; but there is nothing of this kind in God. He is pure, unsullied Light. Variation and change, if they take place at all, take place in us, and not in the Father of lights.—BENGEL.

God is the Father of all lights—the light of the natural world, the sun, the moon, the stars, shining in the heavens; the light of reason and conscience; the light of His Law; the light of prophecy shining in a dark place; the light of the gospel shining throughout the world; the light of apostles, confessors, martyrs, bishops, and priests, preaching that gospel to all nations; the light of the Holy Ghost shining in our hearts; the light of the heavenly city; God is the Father of them all. He is the everlasting Father of the everlasting Son, who is the Light of the world. Father is something more than Author or Giver, all lights are His offspring.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

"The Father of lights": that is a striking description of God. God is like the sun who is the centre and chief of all the glories of the visible universe. The sun among the stars is like a father among his children, a

prince among his subjects. But the sun of the visible heavens holds no constant place; he rises in the morning and only gradually reaches his meridian splendour, and then he gradually declines and sinks in the west. With God there can be no variation; His splendour is always the splendour of noonday. The sun of the visible heavens is sometimes obscured; a shadow is cast upon him; he is eclipsed. But as there is no change in God's own glory, neither can that glory be dimmed by change in His creation; no shadow is cast upon Him by any turning. All His gifts are good: He cannot tempt us, for His goodness is unchangeable.—R. W. DALE.

Let the light every day, as soon as we see it, put us in mind to get us to the Father of lights; let our prayer go up to heaven that His grace may come down to us, so to lighten us in our ways and works, so that in the end we may come to dwell with Him in the light whereof there is no eventide, the sun whereof never sets, nor knows tropic.—BP. ANDREWES.

Ought there not to be, if this picture of the Eternal Giver is true, a great deal more likeness in the faces and characters of the sons of the Eternal Giver to their Father. You know how fathers and mothers love to see their likeness in their children. Well, now, I fully believe that the reason that Christianity progresses so slowly, that we are not more impressive to the world, and able to make a far quicker impression, is that the sons of the Eternal Giver are so unlike their Father. The world does not believe at all fully yet in God, and that is because the sons of the Eternal Giver do not give themselves away with the generosity that is to be expected of those who are His children.

A. F. WINNINGTON-INGRAM.

TRUE RELIGION

GOOD SEED IN GOOD SOIL

Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Jas. I. 21.

IT is the "soul" which carries the personality of the man: which is between the "spirit" drawing it upwards, and the "flesh" drawing it downwards, and is saved or lost, passes into life or death, according to the choice between these two. And the "implanted word," working through the "spirit" and by the Divine Spirit, is a spiritual agency, able to save the "soul."—H. ALFORD.

We are to "receive" it; assent to the truths of it, consent to the laws of it; "receive" it as the stock does the graft; so that the fruit which is produced may be, not according to the nature of the stock, but according to the nature of that word which is ingraffed into our souls. We must therefore yield ourselves to the word of God, with most submissive, humble, and tractable tempers: this is to "receive it with meekness." Being willing to hear of our faults, and taking it not only patiently, but thankfully; desiring to be moulded and formed by the word of God.—M. HENRY.

The only soil wherein the word will grow is a heart full of meekness, a heart that is purged of those luxuriant weeds, that grow so rank in it by nature; these must be plucked up and thrown out to make place for this word. How few consider and prize it as the great means of God for the salvation of souls, the beginner and sustainer of the Divine life of grace within us, and certainly until we have these thoughts of it, hearing the word with attention and some present delight, we miss the right use of it and turn it from its true end.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

HEARING AND DOING

But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.
Jas. I. 25.

THE word which we translate "looketh into" is very emphatic, and signifies that deep and attentive consideration given to a thing or subject which a man cannot bring up to his eyes, and therefore must bend his back and neck, stooping down, that he may see it to the greater advantage. The "law of liberty" must mean the gospel; it is a law, for it imposes obligations from God, and prescribes a rule of life. It is, nevertheless, a law that gives liberty from the guilt, power, dominion, and influence of sin; and it is "perfect," providing a fullness of salvation for the soul. It may also be called "perfect" here, in opposition to the law, which was a system of types and representations of which the gospel is the sum and substance. Some think that the word "perfect" is added to signify that the whole of the gospel must be considered and received, not a part; all its threatenings with its promises, all its precepts with its privileges. The word translated "continueth" means takes time to see and examine the state of his soul, the grace of his God, the extent of his duty, and the height of the promised glory. The metaphor here is taken from those who spend much time at their glass, in order that they may adorn themselves to the greatest advantage.—A. CLARKE.

He who has carefully reflected on what he professes to believe, and pierced to the spirit of his faith, has gained a vantage ground for action. But knowledge is only a vantage ground; not a victory.—B. F. WESTCOTT.

WORTHY WORSHIP

Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and *to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

Jas. I. 27.

THE original word, here rendered "religion," strictly signifies Divine worship, and intimates here, that no kind of religious services paid to the Deity can be of any avail, if we neglect the royal law of charity.—P. DODDRIDGE.

It should be here observed, that the Apostle does not set down the whole of religion, but an eminent part and instance of it, as that without which all religion is vain: that acts of charity, when they flow from a religious principle, are as acceptable to God as acts of worship: and that charity and purity, the relieving of the afflicted and a life unspotted, must go together, or God accepts of neither.—W. BURKITT.

St. James is here describing religion, not in its principle, but in its effects: and those effects are truly, and justly, and fully displayed. They are by the Apostle made to consist in two large articles: in succouring the distress of others, and maintaining our own innocency. And these two articles do comprehend the whole of the effects of true religion; which were exactly what the Apostle meant to describe. Had St. James intended to set forth the motives and principles of religion, as they ought to subsist in the heart of a Christian, he would doubtless have mentioned love to God, and faith in Jesus Christ; for from these must spring every thing good and acceptable in our actions. But it is one thing to set before us the principle of religion, and another the effects of it. These are not to be confounded.—W. PALEY.

WORLDLY VALUES

My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord *of glory, with respect of persons.*
Jas. II. 1.

THERE is a nobility without heraldry, a natural dignity, whereby one man is ranked with another, another filed before him, according to the quality of his desert, and pre-eminence of his good parts.—SIR T. BROWNE.

The verse forcibly represents the Saviour as the Sovereign of glory, the fountain of all such honour as is real, just, and worthy of being esteemed. That which constitutes true glory, and is a basis for just esteem and honour, depends upon Christ. He it is who has the power to confer real greatness.—J. P. SMITH.

It is unworthy to cast down those whom God lifts up, and to treat with contempt those whom He marks with honour. But God honoureth the poor; whoso, therefore, despiseth them is reversing the Divine order.
CALVIN.

The apostle principally complains of a proneness to give honour to worldly greatness merely on account of worldly greatness, and paying more homage to exalted wickedness than to oppressed grace.
T. MANTON.

He is deprecating that homage to wealth which implies that it is honourable for its own sake alone, and that poverty is disgraceful however borne; a homage which, while it is sinful everywhere, cannot be practised in the sanctuary without offering peculiar insult to the throne of God.—J. HOWE.

We usually call a poor man a poor soul: a poor soul may be a rich Christian, and a rich man may have a poor soul.—J. TRAPP.

LAW AND LIBERTY

So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty.

Jas. II. 12.

THE whole Epistle is founded on the perfect law of Christ—the rule of life as revealed in the Gospel—more especially on that declaration of it contained in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the law of our liberty, not as in contrast with a former law of bondage, but as viewed on the side of its being the law of the new life and birth, with all its spontaneous and free development of obedience.

H. ALFORD.

Never is a man free till out of a principle of love he keep God's law.—J. TRAPP.

There is no proper liberty but under rule, and in the sense of rule. It holds high sisterhood with law, nay, it is twin-born with law itself. Even our existence droops and drags a chain if it cannot touch some principled way of order, to be ennobled by it. There is, in fact, no bondage so dreadfully sterile as vaga-bondage ; that which strays and straggles where it will, and finds no hand of discipline ever laid upon it.

H. BUSHNELL.

There is great danger in contending for freedom, either civil or religious, of making it the end instead of the means.—J. KER.

A man must be perfectly free that the whole weight of his responsibilities may come upon him. Liberty is the correlative of responsibility.—J. DENNEY.

The liberty of beloved children is a thorough detachment from all things in order to follow God's recognised will.—FRANCIS DE SALES.

The royal law is a law of love.—DE PRESSENSÉ.

FRUITLESS FAITH

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

Jas. II. 14.

IT is a question whether St. James's protest against reliance on faith alone has any reference, direct or indirect, to St. Paul's language and teaching; whether, in fact, it is not aimed against an entirely different type of religious feeling, against the Pharisaic spirit which rested satisfied with a barren orthodoxy, fruitless in works of charity.

J. B. LIGHTFOOT.

O, faith is a lively, busy, active thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be ceaselessly working good! It does not ask either if good works are to be done, but before it asks, it has done them and is ever doing. But whoso doeth not such works is an unbelieving man, gropes and looks out for faith and good works, and neither knows what is faith nor what are good works, but for all chatters and talks much of faith and good works. Faith is a living, well-weighed assurance of the grace of God, so sure, that he would a thousand times die for it, and such assurance and knowledge of Divine grace renders men glad, daring and merry before God and all creatures, which is the work of the Holy Ghost in faith. Hence man becomes without constraint ready and glad to serve everybody, to suffer many things to the praise of God and from love of God who has been so gracious to him, so that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yea, as impossible as it is to separate burning and shining from fire.—LUTHER.

James by no means affirms that works give life to, produce, or create faith; for faith comes by the power of the word, entering into and received by us and by

nothing else. But faith grows complete in works. The strength of faith becomes fully proved, verified, and its operation completed. Thus our calling and election are made sure in the diligence of living and doing (2 Pet. i. 10).—R. E. Stier.

Paul says, Faith *only* is that which justifies us, not works. But James says, " Not a faith which is without works." There will be works with faith, as there is thunder with lightning ; but just as it is not the thunder, but the lightning, that strikes the tree, so it is not the works which justify. Put it in one sentence : *Faith alone justifies ; but not the faith which is alone.* God reckons the trust in Him as righteousness, because it is the fountain and the root of righteousness, being, indeed, the life Divine in the soul. He reckons it as such (that is, He justifies the soul that has it) without works—that is, before works are done, and not because of the works. But, then, that faith will not be without works ; for the tree *must* grow, and the life of God in the soul, sanguine trust in God, *must* spring up with acts.

F. W. Robertson.

The *works* (which carry us back to i. 22, 27) are tacitly identified with the second table of the Decalogue, i.e. the " royal law " of verse 18. They are equivalent to *love*, and contrasted with an unworking, unloving faith.—R. Scott.

The husks of emptiness rustle in every wind, the full corn in the ear holds up its golden fruit to the Lord of the harvest ; a good man's faith is manifested by his labours, standing not in words, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, a faith that works by love to the purifying of the heart.—J. G. Whittier.

Without works faith is a palsied hand.—Augustine.

HEAVENLY WISDOM

THE CONTROL OF SPEECH

If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.

Jas. III. 2.

EVEN in one word; contrasted with many.

BENGEL.

The tongue guides men either to virtue or to vice (1 Cor. xv. 33). The tongue of the Christian is ruled only with the bridle of faith and love.—LUTHER.

Our intercourse with others renders itself mainly into government of the tongue. I do not know which of these two things is the most astonishing, the unexpected importance of the place assigned to this duty in Holy Scripture, or the utter unconcern which even good men often feel about it. For the most part we have gone far along our road in devotion and done ourselves many an irreparable mischief, before we bestow half the carefulness on the government of our tongue, which it not only deserves but imperiously requires.—F. W. FABER.

Let not thy tongue be a thorny bush, pricking and hurting those who are about thee, nor altogether a barren tree, yielding nothing; but a fruitful tree, a tree of life to thy neighbour.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

Most people seem to feel hard words more than hard deeds, and are more upset by insults than by actual injuries.—PLUTARCH.

By the faculty of speech man is distinguished from the rest of creation: by it his thoughts are borne, as upon eagles' wings, to the remotest shores, and are carried to distant ages; by it they are endued with the attributes of omnipresence and immortality; by it men are reclaimed from savage ignorance; by it cities

are built and are peopled, laws promulgated, alliances formed, leagues made ; by it men are excited to deeds of heroic valour, and to prefer eternity to time, and the good of their country to their own ; through it the affairs of the world are transacted ; it negotiates the traffic of commerce, and exchanges the produce of our soil and climate for that of another ; it pleads the cause of the innocent, and checks the course of the oppressor ; it gives vent to the tenderest emotions ; it cheers the dreariness of life. By it virtuous deeds of men are proclaimed to the world with a trumpet's voice ; by it the memory of the dead is kept alive in families. It is the teacher of arts and sciences, the interpreter of poetic visions, and of subtle theories of philosophy ; it is the rudder and helm by which the state of the world is steered ; it is the instrument by which the Gospel of Christ is preached to all nations, and the Scriptures sound in the ears of the Church, and the world unites in prayer and praise to the Giver of all good, and the chorus of Saints and Angels pours forth hallelujahs before His throne. Such being the prerogatives of speech, it is a heinous sin to pervert the heavenly faculty, to insult the Name of the Giver Himself, or to injure man, made in the image of God.

Bp. Wordsworth.

Be calm in arguing, for fierceness makes
Error a fault and truth discourtesy :
Why should I feel another man's mistakes
More than his sickness or his poverty ?
In love I should : but anger is not love ;
Nor wisdom neither ; therefore gently move.

G. Herbert.

Of all vices those of the tongue are most ordinary.

W. Hammond.

THE PERILS OF SPEECH

But the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.
Jas. III. 8.

THERE is no sin of which the tongue may not be the cause and instrument, and which as a poisoned seed it may not contain.—QUESNEL.

Evil speech is the devil's drivel; a slanderer carries the devil's pack.—J. TRAPP.

I have several times seen the stiletto and the rosary come out of the same pocket.—S. T. COLERIDGE.

By nature we have as great a store of venomous words as a cobra has of poison. O Lord, take away the poison bags and cause our lips to drop honey.
C. H. SPURGEON.

In St. James's day, as now, it would appear that there were idle men and idle women, who went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went, and yet you could not take up that slander and detect the falsehood there. You could not evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering and visible. You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute slander, it is necessary that the word spoken should be false—half-truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that a word should be distinctly uttered; a dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance, nay, even an emphatic silence may do the work; and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human

existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life.—F. W. Robertson.

All sins come under the head of thought, word, and deed ; and faults in word are the most common and often the most dangerous for several reasons. First, because sins of thought only injure oneself, and give no scandal or bad example to others ; God alone sees and is displeased with them, and moreover a loving repentance and ready turning to Him blots them out ; whereas sins of the tongue go further, the evil word once uttered can only be recalled by a humble retractation, and even thus a brother's heart may have been poisoned by it. Again, notorious acts of sin are liable to public punishment ; but evil speaking, unless it is exceptionally gross and slanderous, is subject to no check. Thirdly, sins of the tongue are specially dangerous because people do so little in the way of restitution or reparation for them.—Francis de Sales.

Is it not a fact that there are many men the very existence of whom is a baneful poison ? They dart their livid tongue like the tongue of a serpent ; and the venom of their disposition corrodes every object upon which it concentrates.—Pliny.

Other sins decay with age, this many times increases ; we grow more froward and pettish, as natural strength decays and the days come on in which we have no pleasure. When other sins lose their vigour, being tamed and subdued by the infirmities of age, the spirit often grows more tart, nature being drawn down to the dregs and the expressions become more passionate.

T. Manton.

Too often the tongue is like a sword in the hand of a madman, used at random with great folly and viciousness of mind.—Bp. Butler.

WISDOM, TRUE AND FALSE

This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. . . . But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy.

Jas. III. 15, 17.

THE best evidence of heaven-born wisdom is meekness and practical godliness. The wisdom that cometh not from above is earthly—can rise no higher than the earth to which it cleaves, is of the senses, and for subtlety resembles the work of the devil. This infernal wisdom it is which begets envy and party spirit ; and their deadly fruit is restless perturbation and every evil work. " But the wisdom from above "—heavenly wisdom, a ray in our hearts from the Increate Light, a reflection in us of Him whose name is Wisdom, a spiritual grasp of the truth of things, a knowledge of ourselves, and a knowledge of God as our forgiving Father, the breathing in our spirit of the Holy Spirit ; and thus the re-creation in us of the image of eternal love—this wisdom " is first of all pure "—like the sunlight, which, though shining on defilement, remains undefiled ; " then peaceable "—for the man in whose heart the peace of God rules, loves peace and makes peace ; " gentle "—not forbidding but forbearing, and herein to be of gentle birth and blood is the privilege of every saint ; " easy to be entreated—not self-opinionated, headstrong or unforgiving, but courteous and compliant ; full of mercy "—not walking the earth with a cold suspicious eye and a hard unfeeling heart, but freely dispensing the mercy which has been so freely received ; " and of good fruits "—in which mercy delights, words of kindness,

acts of benevolence, a heart ever devising some good for the bodies or souls of those in need ; " without partiality "—or, " uncensorious," not without preferences, but a charity which embraces all men ; " without hypocrisy "—not playing a part, but transparent, for the child of wisdom is but another name for the child of light. How exquisite this description, which vividly reminds us of St. Paul's delineation of love (1 Cor. xiii. 4–7). Thrice blessed graces, invisible themselves, but discernible by their celestial fragrance and fruitage, of which the closing words further testify, " The fruit of righteousness " (cf. Heb. xii. 11) " is sown in peace by them whose doings make for peace "—for the fruit is wrapped up in the seed which they sow, of which they gather the first-ripe sheaves now, and shall reap the abundant harvest in the ages to come.

E. H. Bickersteth.

The seven qualities which James attributes to the wisdom from above are nothing but the seven colours of the one ray of light of heavenly truth, which has been revealed and has appeared in Christ Himself. He is therefore supremely entitled to the name " the Wisdom of God " (Luke xi. 49).—J. P. Lange.

This mildness and sweet reasonableness it was which stamped the disciples with the individual charm they had in Jesus Christ, who came into the world as something new, won its heart and conquered it. Everyone had been asserting his ordinary self and was miserable ; to forbear to assert one's ordinary self, to place one's happiness in mildness and sweet reasonableness, was a revelation.—M. Arnold.

Glad wisdom is not gotten, but is given :
Not dug out of the earth, but dropp'd from heaven.

Owen Meredith.

THE WORLDLY LIFE

THE SOURCE OF STRIFE

Whence come *wars and whence* come *fightings among you?* come they *not hence*, even *of your pleasures that war in your members?*

Jas. IV. 1.

JAMES, like Paul, presupposes an inward conflict in man, the conflict between flesh and spirit.

NEANDER.

Unruly lusts within are the cause of the unquietnesses and contentions abroad in the world. One man will have his corrupt will, and another his, and thus they flock and jostle one another; and by the cross encounters of their purposes, as flints meeting, they strike out these sparks that set all on fire.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

In every man there is a root of *selfishness*. So long as we follow the impulses of our nature, we are apt to refer everything to some selfish end, to our own pleasure, to our profit, to our advancement and exultation. Again, in every man there is a root of *worldly-mindedness*. Our aims, our purposes, our wishes, our hopes, our fears, are all hemmed in by the world, and summed up in it. Moreover, in every man there is a root of *fleshly-mindedness*. His soul is drugged from childhood upward with the stimulants and opiates of the senses. In every man's heart there is this triple root of sin—no one who knows his own heart will dispute it—the root of selfishness, from which spring self-indulgence, self-will, self-esteem, and the whole brood of vanity and pride; the root of worldly-mindedness, which issues in ambition, in covetousness, in the love of money, in the desire of advancement, of honour, of power; and the root of carnal-mindedness, from which the lusts of the flesh sprout rankly.—J. C. HARE.

"RESIST!—DRAW NIGH!"

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

Jas. IV. 7–8.

THE devil can fight, but he cannot conquer; if, therefore, thou dost withstand him, he will flee from thee, beaten and ashamed.

HERMAS.

Sometimes, indeed, there appears a scuffle between Satan and a carnal heart; but it is a mere cheat, like the fighting of two fencers on a stage. You would think at first they were in earnest; but observing how wary they are where they hit one another, you may soon know they do not mean to kill: and that which puts all out of doubt when the guise is done, you shall see them making merry together with what they have got of their spectators, which was all they fought for. When a carnal heart makes the greatest bustle against sin, by complaining of it, or praying against it, follow him but off the stage of duty (where he had gained the reputation of a saint, the prize he fights for), and you shall see them sit as friendly in a corner as ever. It is not a form of religion, but its power, that the devil maligns. The devil can live very peaceably as a quiet neighbour, by the door of such as will content themselves with an empty profession.

God is His people's keeper: but can he expect to be kept by Him that chargeth not the Divine Providence with his keeping?

"Pray that you enter not into temptation." Now when thou canst not draw out the long sword of a solemn prayer, then go to the short dagger of ejaculatory prayer; and with this, if in the hand of faith, thou mayest stab thy enemy to the heart.—W. GURNALL.

THE UNKNOWN TO-MORROW

Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that.

Jas. IV. 15.

WE speak more presumptuously before men than we think in our own hearts; though there also we are too liable to forget God.

H. ALFORD.

Our calendars give the longest day and the shortest, the fasts and the festivals: but no Calendar gives the *last* day.—R. E. STIER.

This is not to be fulfilled by the mere use of the words "please God," or of the letters D.V., when we speak of our future projects, but by a deep inner consciousness that the future is wrapped in utter uncertainty, that we can see no farther than to what lies under our hand, and that even the cycle of the present day embraces more time than we have any right to calculate upon.—E. M. GOULBURN.

No man has seen to-morrow, no man can see to-morrow, to-morrow is not within the visual line, and is not within the line of calculation unless the line be approached religiously. We have no right to speak about to-morrow as if we had any lien upon it or any right to its possession and enjoyment. We can only enter the sanctuary called to-morrow by the gate Beautiful, the gate of God's temple, the portal of the sanctuary of the Eternal. When we speak of to-morrow we should speak in an undertone.—J. PARKER.

Find out the plan of God in your generation: and then beware lest you cross that plan, or fail to find your own place in it.—PRINCE ALBERT'S MAXIM.

Man is not sure of to-morrow, and yet he extends his cares to future ages.—QUESNEL.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE

Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts : for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
Jas. V. 8.

WHILE the Christians of the Apostolic Age were perhaps too much inclined to consider the coming of Christ to be near at hand in a literal sense, the Christian sense of our own age suffers this great final event to stand too much in the background and substitutes for it, in most instances, a mere individual hope of salvation immediately after death. The more we learn again that we belong " to men also that love His appearing " (2 Tim. iv. 8) in the Apostolic acceptance of the term, the easier we shall find in view of this the practice of Christian patience and endurance the only satisfactory attitude to the final development of the drama of history.—J. P. LANGE.

At the harvest we shall understand the ways of God. We must wait for the time of ripening.—R. E. STIER.

The present is not complete without the future, so for the future I wait, and in the present will try to find, not comfort and satisfaction, but work and contentment.
M. DODS.

O thou who mournest on thy way,
With longings for the close of day ;
He walks with thee, that angel kind,
And gently whispers, " Be resigned :
Bear up, bear on, the end shall tell
The dear Lord ordereth all things well."
J. G. WHITTIER.

Like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge.—E. B. BROWNING.

"SWEAR NOT!"

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgement.

Jas. V. 12.

THE requirement here is simplicity and sincerity of conversation.—BENGEL.

We have no reason to think that St. James disapproved swearing before a magistrate, to which his prohibition of swearing by heaven, and earth, cannot possibly relate; or even swearing on any other solemn and needful occasion: but only such oaths as are apt to break out in common speech, especially from persons under oppression.—ABP. SECKER.

How can you expect the name of God to be a strong tower in your distress, if you profane it, and trifle with it at other times?—M. HENRY.

Swear not in jest lest you go to hell in earnest. The swearer rends and tears God's name as a draper rasheth out a piece of cloth to the buyer.—J. TRAPP.

He proposes the best remedy for the correction of the vice which he is censuring; namely, that mankind should accustom themselves to truth and constancy in all their words and actions. Since the perfidy, or levity, of man is the source whence the pernicious practice of swearing issues, James, in order to correct the latter vice, warns us that the former ought to be removed. For the reason that a cure ought to begin from the cause.

CALVIN.

Every word should be to the Christian what an oath is to others. Each holds his word sacred.

NEANDER.

CONFESSION AND PRAYER

Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.

Jas. V. 16.

WE everywhere find the use of confession, especially public, allowed of, and commended by the fathers; but the extreme and rigorous necessity of auricular and private confession we find not. It was not then the faith and doctrine of God's Church that the only remedy for sin after baptism is sacramental penitency: that confession in secret is an essential part thereof: that God Himself cannot now forgive sins without the priest; that because forgiveness at the hands of the priest must arise from confession in the offender. therefore to confess unto him is a matter of such necessity as, being not either in deed, or, at the least, in desire, performed, excludeth utterly from all pardon, and must consequently in Scripture be commanded wheresoever any promise of forgiveness is made. No, no; these opinions have youth in their countenance. Antiquity knew them not, it never thought nor dreamed of them. . . . The great thing which made men forward and willing upon their knees to confess whatsoever they had committed against God, and in no wise to be withheld from the same with any fear of disgrace, contempt, or obloquy, which might ensue, was their fervent desire to be helped and assisted with the prayers of God's saints. Wherein as St. James doth exhort unto *mutual confession*, alleging this only for a reason, that *just men's devout prayers* are of great avail with God; so penitents for that intent unburthen their minds, even to *private* persons.—R. HOOKER.

Let thy mother the Church weep for thee, let her wash and bathe thy faults with her tears : our Lord doth love that many should become supplicants for one.

AMBROSE.

Some few assembled make a Church, and the Church is as Christ Himself ; when thou dost therefore put forth thy hands to the knees of thy brethren, thou touchest Christ, it is Christ unto whom thou art a suppliant.—TERTULLIAN.

No wonder that the heart of man should feel strangely yet sweetly at home in the region of spiritual intervention ; no wonder that intercession for others, which is but the practical extension of the atonement, the pouring out of one human soul for another in prayer, even as Christ's soul was poured forth for the world in agony and death, should become the natural language of every heart whose highest energies Divine grace has touched and kindled into life. Intercession is the mother-tongue of the whole family of Christ.—J. KEBLE.

What are men better than sheep, or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer—
Both for themselves, and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is, every way,
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

TENNYSON.

If there be some weaker one,
Give me strength to help him on ;
If a blinder soul there be,
Let me guide him nearer Thee.—WHITTIER.

James would have the people mutually confess their faults one to another, that so they may mutually pray for one another.—E. LEIGH.

1 PETER

SALUTATION

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are sojourners . . . Grace to you and peace be multiplied.
1 *Pet. I.* 1, 2.

THE word rendered "sojourners" means people who are resident for a time among strangers.—A. J. MASON.

The Hebrew word of salutation we have here—*peace*; and that which is the spring both of this and all good things in the other word of salutation used by the Greeks—*grace*. All right rejoicing and prosperity and happiness flow from this source and from this alone, and are sought elsewhere in vain.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

There is no Epistle in the sacred canon the language and spirit of which come more directly home to the personal trials and wants and weaknesses of the Christian life. Its affectionate warnings and strong consolation have ever been treasured up close to the hearts of the weary and heavy-laden but onward-pressing servants of God. The mind of our Father toward us, the aspect of our blessed Lord as presented to us, the preparation by sufferings for our heavenly inheritance—all these, as here set forth, are peculiarly lovely and encouraging. And the motives to holy purity spring direct out of the simple and childlike recognition of the will of our heavenly Father to bring us to His glory. The entire Epistle is the following out of our Lord's command to its writer, "And thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."—H. ALFORD.

As James calls Christianity a law, so Peter considers it a promise or prophecy, the precious earnest of a still more glorious future. This is well suited to his purpose of consolation, and of encouragement to persevere under suffering.—SCHAFF.

THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

AN INHERITANCE INCORRUPTIBLE

Blessed be *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

1 *Pet. I.* 3–4.

THE world decays, its riches corrupt, its crowns fade away; but God, who is the world, the riches, and the crown of His people, is immortal and unchangeable. Whoever desires anything better knows not either what he despises, or what he seeks elsewhere.—QUESNEL.

This majestic doxology bears a remarkable resemblance to the introduction of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. They are two glorious psalms of praise, illuminated with all the splendours of the new covenant, touching the deepest chords of human experience, and unrolling all the promises of the cloudless and eternal future. Here the stream of life is tracked to its Infinite Fountain, which flows forth in the deep and wide channel of mercy through the risen Saviour's redemption quickening every believer by the Holy Spirit's new-creating grace to a living hope. Every believer is an heir, an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ of an inheritance with which no earthly estate is worthy to be compared.

E. H. BICKERSTETH.

All the estate of a believer lies in hope—and it is a royal estate, an inheritance which cannot be destroyed, defiled, or ever decay.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

It is called " a living hope " because it is active—making a man purify himself—it brings life into the spirit, and lives when a man dies; and is so called in opposition to the dying hopes of the ungodly.—E. LEIGH.

THE HIDDEN SPRING OF GLADNESS

Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even *the salvation of* your *souls.*

1 *Pet. I.* 8–9.

IT is only where there is much faith, and much love, that there is much joy.

A. MACLAREN.

Love and belief are inseparably intermingled. If you ask me, How shall I love? I answer, Believe. If you ask, How shall I believe? I answer, Love.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

Faith in Christ begets love to Him, and both these give assured hope of salvation by Him, making it as certain to them as if it were already in their hand, and they in possession of it. And from all these together results this exultation, or leaping for joy, "joy unspeakable and full of glory."—ABP. LEIGHTON.

Faith is indeed to us a second sight, which reveals Jesus crowned in heaven with glory and honour, and entering within the veil where His very presence is an intercession. To faith He is no mere record of the past traced on the most sacred page of history; for faith holds daily communion with Him, as with a Person, as with a vast, all-comprehending intellect, as with a resistless will, as with a living heart of surpassing tenderness.—H. P. LIDDON.

We were not by when Jesus came;
But round us, far and near,
We see His trophies, and His name
In choral echoes hear.—J. KEBLE.

He is the unseen Friend whom they know by the power of faith.—G. C. MARTIN.

SO GREAT SALVATION

Which things angels desire to look into.

1 *Pet. I.* 12.

WHICH angels stoop down to examine; the posture of those who are earnestly intent on finding out a thing, especially a writing difficult to be read; they bring it to the light, place it so that the rays may fall on it as collectively as possible, and then stoop down in order to examine all the parts, that they may be able to make out the whole. There is perhaps an allusion here to the attitude of the cherubim who stood at the ends of the ark of the covenant, in the inner tabernacle, with their faces turned towards the mercy-seat or propitiatory in a bending posture, as if looking attentively, or, as we term it, poring upon it. Even the holy angels are struck with astonishment at the plan of human redemption.—A. CLARKE.

We must not omit to notice the comprehensive grandeur of the view thus presented to us by St. Peter of the agents engaged in the ministry of redemption: prophets from the beginning, evangelists in the fullness of time, angels throughout watching and inquiring, all alike overshadowed, possessed, and energised by the ever-present Spirit of Christ.—F. C. COOK.

Saints of every age are united with the highest intelligences of heaven in holy contemplation of the mystery of godliness.—E. H. BICKERSTETH.

Shall the prophets be so desirous to know the time when these things shall happen, and angels be so diligent to look into these glorious revelations, and we to whom and for whom the revelation was made neglect not only to obtain, but even to know this great salvation?

DR. WHITBY.

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT

HOPEFUL VIGILANCE

Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
1 *Pet. I.* 13.

A METAPHOR from persons gathering up the flowing Oriental dress (which had been let down for repose), so as to be ready for energetic action. A "mind," rather than "soul" or "heart," seems to bespeak practical intelligence.—A. J. MASON.

The strong purposes and resolutions of the mind are here meant. A loose mind is unfit for God's service. J. TRAPP.

Have no scattered thoughts, but tighten up the resolution of your mind, and stand ready, alert and concentrated for the call to work, to fight, to suffer. Be serious and steady, without morbid excitement or eccentricity.—G. F. C. FRONMÜLLER.

The exercise of hope, as I can conceive, is not only to have the habit of it strong in the soul, but to act upon it often, to be often turning that way, to view that approaching day of liberty, to "lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh." Certainly they who long much for the coming of Christ will often look out to it. We are usually hoping after other things, which do but offer themselves to draw us after them, and to scorn us. What are the breasts of the most of us, but so many nests of foolish hopes and fears intermixed which entertain us day and night, and steal away our precious hours from us, that might be laid out so gainfully upon the wise and sweet thoughts of eternity, and upon the blessed and assured hope of the coming of our beloved Saviour.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

REVERENCE

And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear.

1 *Pet. I.* 17.

IF the holiness of Fatherhood be minimised or obscured, every other attribute will be impoverished. Denude your conception of holiness, and it is like withdrawing the ozone from the invigorating air, or detracting the freshening salt from the healthy sea. Suppress or ignore the element of holiness, and think of the Father as affectionate, and the love that you attribute to Him will be only as a close and enervating air. Love without holiness is deoxygenated and its ministry is that of an opiate or narcotic Pity without holiness is a bloodless sentiment destitute of all healing efficacy. Forgiveness without holiness is the granting of a cheap and superficial excuse in which there is nothing of the saving strength of sacrifice. Begin with pity or forgiveness or gentleness, and you have dispositions without dynamics, poor limp things which afford no resource for the uplifting and salvation of the race. But begin with holiness, and you put a dynamic into every disposition, which makes it an engine of spiritual health.

J. H. JOWETT.

As our fear excludeth not that boldness which becometh saints, so if our familiarity with God do not savour of fear, it draweth too near that irreverent confidence wherewith true humility can never stand.

T. HOOKER.

This grace of *fear* setteth the watch and keepeth the watchman awake.—BUNYAN.

BROTHERLY LOVE

Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently.

1 *Pet. I.* 22.

WE get a clear glimpse into the Apostle's mind through the vivid word in which he urges the counsel, "love one another . . . *fervently*." There is a suggestion of increased tension in the word, as when the string of a violin has been stretched to a tighter pitch that it might yield a higher note. There are heights of love unreached. Tighten the strings of your devotion that your soul may yield the entrancing strains. Be vigilant against all laxity, and stretch yourselves to the uttermost in the endeavour to compass the manifold music of the marvellous scales of love. When, therefore, the apostle enjoins a more fervent love, I feel that he drives me back to the first preliminary stage of spiritual growth. When he appeals for higher notes of love, he is really counselling a deeper holiness. If my love is to be more intense, I must seek a "closer walk with God." I must tighten my holiness if I would enrich my music. There will come a more discerning love when there is a more devoted obedience. I shall pass from finer homage to rarer spiritual purity, and from rarer spiritual purity to increasing exquisiteness in love.—J. H. JOWETT.

Fervent love for one another out of a *pure heart*, this is religion in its fairest, most perfect development on earth. Were all that claims to be religion really imbued with this spirit, truth would have a safer as well as a warmer home than she now has in this lower world. Pure, holy, Christian love furnishes no soil for the roots of error.—J. S. STONE.

A HOUSE OF LIVING STONES

Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
1 Pet. II. 5.

GOD'S house is built of growing stones, of green timber.—J. TRAPP.

They were in process of being built up. " Built up," too, only expresses a part of the Greek word, which implies " built up *upon* Him." In the first three verses of the chapter these Hebrew Christians were treated ***individually***, as so many babes, to grow up into an ideal *freedom of soul*: here they are treated *collectively* as so many stones, incomplete and unmeaning in themselves, by arrangement and cemented union to rise into an ideal *house of God*. St. Peter does not distinctly say that the " house " is a temple (for the word " spiritual " is only the opposite of " material "), but the context makes it plain that such is the case. The temple is, however, regarded not in its capacity of a place for *worship* so much as a place for Divine *inhabitation*. " The spiritual house," says Leighton truly, " is the palace of the Great King. The Hebrew word for *palace* and *temple* is one." And the reason for introducing this figure seems to be, to console the Hebrews for their vanishing privileges in the temple at Jerusalem. They are being taught to recognise that they themselves in their union with one another, and with Jesus Christ, are the true abode of the Most High. All history is the process of building up a " spiritual palace " out of a regenerate humanity, in order that, in the end, the *Father Himself* may ocupy it.

" Being *living* stones," says Bengel, " they can be priests as well." They not only *compose* the Temple,

but minister in it. By becoming Christians they are cut off from neither Temple nor hierarchy, nor sacrifice ; all are at hand, and they themselves are all. The old priesthood, like the old Temple, has " had its day, and ceased to be." Mark, though, that the Apostle is not dwelling on the individual priesthood of each (though that is involved), but on the hierarchical order of the whole company of Christians : they are an organised body or college of priests, a new seed of Aaron or Levi.

This new priesthood is not nominal. None is a priest who does not offer sacrifices. But the sacrifices of the new hierarchy are " spiritual "—i.e. the sacrifice of *self*, of the *will*; then, in a minor degree, of words and acts of worship, thanks and praise. And in order to constitute a true priesthood and true sacrifices after the model of Jesus Christ, these sacrifices are offered up on behalf of others. The first notion of the priesthood of all believers is not that of a mediatorial system being abolished, but of the mediatorial system being extended : whereas, before, only Aaron's sons were recognised as mediators and intercessors, now all Israel, all the spiritual Israel, all men everywhere are called to be mediators and intercessors between each other and God. We all help one another to present one another's prayers and praises, but for them to be acceptable, they must be presented finally through Jesus Christ our Great High Priest. He, in His perfect sympathy with all men, must make the sacrifice His own. We must unite our sacrifices with His.—A. J. MASON.

The Church Catholic, despite all appearances to the contrary, *is* a holy body, for they only are its members who are in true and living fellowship with Christ. All others, however they may have the outward notes of belonging to it, are *in* it, but not *of* it.—AUGUSTINE.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.

1 *Pet. II.* 21.

AN example, a copy, a lesson for imitation, adapted to the capacity of a beginner, learning to paint. Thus Peter in this passage plainly paints before the eyes of servants the example of Christ, expressing those features which are expressly adapted to the case of servants.—BENGEL.

As, in the will of God, this unique Man was elected to a unique sorrow, and holds as undisputed a sovereignty in suffering as in self-devotion, all lesser examples and lives will for ever hold a subordinate place, and serve chiefly to reflect light on the central and original Example. In His wounds all human sorrows will hide themselves, and all human self-denials support themselves against His cross.—J. SEELEY.

Always and everywhere have Him devoutly before the eyes of your mind—in His behaviour and in His ways, as when He is with His disciples and when He is with sinners, when He goes forth and when He sits down, when He sleeps and when He wakes, when He eats and when He serves others, setting forth to thyself and thy heart His ways and His doings, how humbly He bore Himself among men. How pitiful He was to the poor; how He despised none, nor shrank from them; how He paid no court to the rich; how free He was from the cares of the world; how patient under insult, and how gentle in answering, for He sought not to maintain His cause by keen and bitter words, but with gentle and humble answer to cure another's malice; what composure in all His behaviour; how

He offered Himself as the pattern of all that is good ; how compassionate He was to the afflicted ; how He condescended to the imperfection of the weak, how mercifully He received the penitent ; how He shunned all display and show, all singularity ; how he avoided all occasions of offence ; how modest in appearance, how earnest in prayer, how sober in His watching, how patient of toil and want, how peaceful and calm in all things.—LUDOLPHUS DE SAXONIA.

He who is God stooped to be born in the womb of His Mother, and waited patiently and grew up ; and when grown up, was not impatient to be recognised as God. He was baptized by His servant, and repelled the tempter only by words. When He became a Teacher, He did not "break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax." He scorned no man's company ; He shunned no man's table. He conversed with publicans and sinners. He poured out water and washed His disciples' feet. He would not injure the Samaritan village which did not receive Him, when His disciples called fire from heaven to consume it. He cured the unthankful ; He withdrew from those who plotted against Him. He had the traitor constantly in His company and did not expose him. And when He is betrayed and is brought to execution, He is "like a sheep which before his shearers is dumb, and a lamb that doth not open its mouth." He who, Lord of angelic legions, did not approve the sword of Peter drawn in His defence, He is spit upon, scourged, mocked. Such long-suffering as His is an example to all men, but is found in God alone.—TERTULLIAN.

Observe how imperturbable He is during His crucifixion, talking to the disciple of His mother, giving good hope to the thief ; whereas before His crucifixion

He seemed in fear: the weakness of His nature was shown then, and the exceeding greatness of His power. He teaches us, too, not to turn back because we may feel disturbed at the difficulties before us; for when we are once actually under the trial, all will be light and easy.—CHRYSOSTOM.

Oh, how great the difference between thy Divine Master's actions and thine! Behold, indeed, thine own habitual impatience under all which thwarts, how little soever, thy will or inclination. Rarely dost thou endure with calmness the faults and imperfections of thy brethren; thou art frequently so easily provoked, that the least offence, the slightest want of consideration or of gratitude, a single sharp word, suffices to wound and to irritate thee, and even at times it may be to inspire thee with burning desires of revenge. Blush, therefore, that thou still so little resemblest thy Divine Pattern; make a firm resolution to be for the future more calm under contradictions, more patient, and less easily provoked. And when thou hast cause to complain of thy neighbour's conduct towards thee, entertain not any wrath against him; but cover his fault with the cloak of charity, forgive him freely, and do him good, if only by praying for him.—PINART.

Why are we who call ourselves His disciples so little like Him? and when shall we understand that we are not genuine Christians so long as the crown of meekness is wanting to our sullied brow? We always wish to gain it through the maintenance of our real or imagined rights: Jesus overcame through suffering wrong, but never doing wrong.—VAN OOSTERZEE.

Christ upon the Cross is a doctor in his chair instructing us in patience.—J. TRAPP.

A CLUSTER OF CHRISTIAN GRACES

Finally, be *ye all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded.*

1 *Peter III.* 8.

THIS one verse hath a cluster of five Christian graces or virtues. That which is in the middle as the stalk or root of the rest, *love*, and the other growing out of it, two on each side ; *unanimity* and *sympathy* on one side, and *pity* and *courtesy* (humblemindedness) on the other.

ABP. LEIGHTON.

St. Peter has here grouped together a number of epithets of which all but one are only used in the New Testament by himself, and they are of that graphic character which is so conspicuous in all the Apostle's language. *Like-minded.* If the word be not there, the spirit is largely exemplified in the early history of the Church. How often we hear the phrase " with one accord " in the opening chapters of the Acts. Thus the disciples continued in prayer ; thus they went daily to the Temple ; thus they lifted up their voices to God, for all they that believed were of one heart and one soul (iv. 32). Such unity is worth more than uniformity. *Compassionate.* This feeling St. Paul describes (Rom. xii. 15) as " rejoicing with them that do rejoice and weeping with them that weep." *Loving as brethren.* The sense of brotherhood is strongly marked in all the New Testament Scriptures. It is the name by which our Lord claims fellowship with men, being not ashamed to call them brethren. It is the designation of the Christian body from the first (Matt. xxiii. 8). Next comes the word which is not Peter's alone : *Tender-hearted.* St. Paul has it (Eph. iv. 32), but it is no Greek notion. It was a Jewish idea that deep feeling

was closely connected with some of the organs of the body. The LXX (who use this Greek word in their version) employ it to express the tenderness of God towards the penitent. *Humble-minded.* This word and those akin to it are almost a New Testament creation. Before Christ none had taught, " He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

J. R. LUMBY.

Those who truly love God love all good wherever they find it. They seek all good to all men. They encourage all good in all men. They commend all good, they always unite themselves with all good, they always acknowledge and defend all good. They have no quarrels. They bear no envy. O Lord, give me more and more of this blessed love.—TERESA.

He who is too full of his own joys and sorrows to get beyond himself, can never come to know himself.

TAULER.

Be useful where thou livest, that they may
Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still.
Kindnesse, good parts, great graces are the way
To compasse this. Finde out men's wants and will,
And meet them there All worldly joys go lesse
To the one joy of doing kindnesses.—G. HERBERT.

The humble man is the surest peace-maker ; of all moral virtues, humility is the most beautiful : she both shuns honour and is the way to it ; she rocks debate asleep, and keeps peace waking, nay, doth foster, doth cherish her.—O. FELTHAM.

Humility is the altar upon which God wishes that we should offer Him His sacrifices.—LA ROCHE.

This verse in an expansion of Christ's teaching in the Golden Rule.—G. C. MARTIN.

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

But and if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye . . . *For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.*
1 *Pet. III.* 14, 17.

IT is the cause, not the punishment, that makes the martyr.—AUGUSTINE.

Not even does suffering deprive you of a happy life; it rather increases it. A remarkable manner of treating the subject of the cross.
BENGEL.

Care only for this, that your heart may be a temple of Christ, in which becoming honour may be given to Him as Lord; then will nothing further disturb you: you have in Him all that you need.—H. ALFORD.

They (the Christians) love all men, and they are persecuted by all. They are ignored, and yet they are condemned. They are put to death, and yet they are endued with life. They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are dishonoured, and yet they are glorified in their dishonour. They are evil-spoken of, and yet they are vindicated. They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they were thereby quickened by life.
EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS.

Should the empress determine to banish me, let her banish me; "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." If she will cast me into the sea, let her cast me into the sea; I will remember Jonah. If she will throw me into a burning, fiery furnace, the three children were there before me. If she will throw me to the wild beasts, I will remember that Daniel was in the den of lions.—CHRYSOSTOM.

THE ARMOUR OF CHRISTLIKENESS

Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind.

1 *Peter IV.* 1.

IT is continually necessary for Christians to live in arms, and put them not off to their dying day; till they put off the body and be altogether free of the flesh. You may take the Lord's promise for victory in the end; that shall not fail: but do not promise yourself ease in the way, for that will not hold. If at some times you be undermost, give not all up for lost: he hath often won the day, who hath been foiled and wounded in the fight. But likewise take not all for won, so as to have no more conflict, when sometimes you have the better in particular battles. Be not desperate when you lose, nor secure when you gain them. When it is worst with you, do not throw away your arms, nor lay them aside when you are at best. Now the way to be armed is this, *the same mind*—How would my Lord Christ carry Himself in this case? And what was His business in all places and companies? Was it not to do the will and advance the glory of His Father? Let thine eye be much on Christ; set thine heart on Him; let it dwell in Him and be still with Him.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

Christ in His death aimed not only at the pardon of sin, but at the destruction of it. Strengthen and fortify yourselves therefore against all temptations, and unto the mortification of your flesh, with the same purpose.

M. POOLE.

The only perfect armour of defence is that principle which was exemplified in the death of Christ.

F. C. COOK.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE MINISTRY OF LOVE

Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins.

1 *Pet. IV.* 8.

LOVE is already presupposed to exist: the injunction is, that it be more vehement. . . . He who greatly loves, covers the faults of him whom he loves, as many as they are: he turns away his own eyes from them, and, as far as is lawful, blinds others respecting them, and makes them the subject of prayer to God. And the Divine love attends such a love as this with aid and approbation, and rewards with a like return him also who loves (Matt. vi. 14). Love also is especially necessary on this account, because the Judge is at hand. And they are blessed whom the end of all things finds without sins, except such as are covered.—BENGEL.

Love delights not in undue disclosing of brethren's failings, doth not eye them rigidly, nor expose them willingly to the eyes of others. The uncovering of sin necessary to the curing of it is not only no breach of charity, but is a main point of it, and the neglect of it the highest kind of cruelty. But, further than that goes this rule, teaching the veiling of our brethren's infirmities from the eyes of others, and even from our own that we look not on them with rigour; no, nor without compassion.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

We may take the saying in its widest reference, "understanding it primarily of forgiveness but then also of that prevention of sin by kindliness of word and deed, and also that intercession for sin in prayer, which are the constant fruits of fervent love. It is a truth from which we need not shrink, that every sin which love hides from man's sight is hidden in God's sight

also. There is but One efficient cause of the hiding of sin : but mutual love *applies* that cause : *draws the universal cover over the particular sin.* This meaning, as long as it is not perverted into the thought that love towards others covers a man's own sin " *ex promerito*," need not and should not be excluded."—H. ALFORD.

St. Peter had spoken of love, *stretching itself* out without interruption ; and the passage James v. 20, considered together with the context here, where St. Peter is presenting Christ as their Example, may suggest a belief, that he is comparing the act of Love to that of the Cherubim *stretching out* their wings on the Mercy Seat, and forming a part of the Mercy Seat (Ex. xxv. 18–20), the emblem of Christ's propitiatory *covering of sins.*—BP. WORDSWORTH.

It is a noble and a great thing to cover the blemishes and to excuse the failings of a friend ; to draw a curtain before his stains, and to display his perfections ; to bury his weakness in silence, but to proclaim his virtues upon the house-top.—R. SOUTH.

Charity which has God for its principle, and Jesus Christ for its pattern, can never end. If our charity is extensive enough to cover all the defects of our neighbour, in bearing with them, that of God will cover all our sins in blotting them out. This does not mean that we ought to cover sins by flattering the sinners by a cruel indulgence over their sins, but in imitating God, who forgives them by a merciful severity.

QUESNEL.

Charity, 'mid the multitude of sins
That she can cover, left not his exposed
To an unforgiving judgment from just Heaven.
Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived !

W. WORDSWORTH (on CHARLES LAMB).

TRUST IN TRIAL

Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator.

1 *Pet. IV.* 19.

IF the sufferings of Christians as Christians are a sign of God's favour towards them, in subjecting them to His judgments, with a view to their not perishing with the ungodly world, then they have every reason to trust Him in these sufferings and take comfort: continuing in that same well-doing which is their very element and condition.—H. ALFORD.

The word "faithful" is used in reference to the "deposit" placed in His hands; and the title "Creator" seems to be chosen here rather than "Father," or the like, because creation of the soul includes not only the giving of its existence but the shaping of its destiny. "The will of God" in accordance with which they suffer, is part of the act of creation. The noble expression, however, contains the idea that the act of creation imposes duties and responsibilities upon the Creator. And God is a "faithful Creator." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."—A. J. MASON.

If God had promised us all peace and quiet in this world, then our troubles here might amaze us, and make us doubt of our future rest; but, finding by proof the manifold tribulations of the life present, we may expect with comfort the promise of the time to come.—JEROME.

We are led to heaven by the same path as God's most favoured children.—VAN OOSTERZEE.

For He who fashioned us from forth His love,
Made us so fair, surrounded us with good,
Out of His love will think of us in death.

C. J. WELLS.

2 PETER

GREETING

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Pet. I. 1–2.

BEFORE this letter was written teachers had risen within the Church who professed to have a deeper and more mysterious interpretation of the doctrines of the Gospel. This esoteric enlightenment they specially named "knowledge" (*gnosis*), and led men astray by profitless inquiries concerning the absolute nature of God and the manner of His communication with the world. To this teaching St. Paul is referring when he speaks of "foolish questions" and "endless genealogies," and it is this which the writer rebukes so vehemently in the next chapter of this letter. As an antidote for the poison, he urges the converts to seek after a true and full knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Father and the Son. No single word can adequately represent this term, which became the watchword of all the Christian teachers.

J. R. LUMBY.

In 2 Peter the corrupt practices and the corrupt principles are more definitely combined. The false teachers of 2 Peter are just a step nearer to the systematised Antinomianism of the second century than the evil-doers denounced by St. Paul. St. Jude shows us in active operation the mischief of which St. Paul and St. Peter had seen the beginning and foretold the development. Tertullian tells us to what hideous proportions the development progressed.

A. PLUMMER.

THE DIVINE LIFE

DIVINE POWER

His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue.

2 *Pet. I.* 3.

THE promises are a precious book, every leaf drops myrrh and mercy.

J. CARDAN.

The natural attributes of God have reference to His *glory*; those attributes which are called moral have reference to His *virtue*. His glory causes that the promises are very great; His virtue that they are precious. The promise itself is a gift; then also that which follows it, the thing promised.—BENGEL.

What is the Divine nature? Eternal truth, righteousness, eternal life, peace, joy, delight, and whatsoever good may be named. Hence he who becomes a partaker of the Divine nature is wise, righteous, and omnipotent against the devil, sin, and death.—LUTHER.

The grant includes all that the infinite God can do for the well-being of man; it far surpasses all human comprehension and thought. It is the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, which is concerned for the believer's interests; it is that he may know this by experience, and that he may be filled with all the fullness of God, that God has made a covenant with him. It is pardon, grace, and eternal glory.—N. W. TAYLOR.

Every promise is built upon four pillars: God's *justice*, which will not suffer Him to deceive; God's *grace* or goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget; God's *truth*, which will not suffer Him to change; God's *power*, which makes Him able to accomplish!

T. MANTON.

THE DUTY OF DILIGENCE

Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge temperance; and in your temperance patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren love.

2 Pet. I. 5–7.

EVERY present step produces and renders easy that which follows: the following tempers and perfects the preceding. *Faith* is the gift of God; therefore we are not commanded to seek for additional faith, but in faith those fruits which are mentioned to the number of seven, faith leading the band, and love bringing up the rear. *Virtue* is a strenuous tone of mind and vigour. It is the result of faith. *Knowledge*: virtue makes us watchful, circumspect, discreet, so as to consider what is to be done or avoided, for the sake of God, ourselves, and others. *Temperance* is the result of knowledge, since it is this which distinguishes evil from good, and teaches us to flee from evil. *Patience* banishes weakness and adds strength; it removes all the hindrances to godliness. *Godliness* sanctifies the natural affections towards parents and others, yea, even towards the Creator. He who has his natural affections sanctified, advances to *love of the brethren*—a natural affection that is purely spiritual. *Love* to all completes this chorus of graces. He who is rightly disposed towards his brethren, extends his love to those who are less nearly connected with him, and even to enemies.—BENGEL.

We venture to affirm that this passage is fraught at once with philosophical justness of classification and with prophetic truth. To convey the full sense of the

apostolic language, it is necessary to resort to a paraphrase of the passage. " Divinely endowed," says the Apostle, " with whatever is important to (spiritual) life and piety ; enriched also with those inestimable promises which ensure to us a participation in the Divine nature—a participation we derive from our acquaintance with Him who has challenged us to so high a glory ; and having, by the same means, gained freedom from the defilement of mundane passions, my brethren, take heed that you beseem yourselves worthily of your vocation—using the utmost assiduity in the pursuit of Christian excellence—see that your faith in these promises is always associated with manly energy or vigour—and then, that your courage (*virtue*) be duly informed by evangelical principles (*knowledge*). Again, take heed that your knowledge (of the gospel) be not abused to licentiousness, but rather be united with self-command and temperance. Nor must this control of the appetites spring from a haughty and fanatical temper, but must consist with humility and submission. Yet let your humility be religious (*not stoical*). Then remember that your piety is not to be unsocial (*or anchoretic*), but fraught with brotherly affection. And lastly, that your affection toward your fellow-Christians is not to be *sectarian*, but expansive, and that it is to spring from the principle of universal love.

ISAAC TAYLOR.

It would conduce to childlike humility if the use of the term *virtue*, in that comprehensive and *notional* sense in which it was used by the ancient Stoics, were abandoned as a relic of paganism, and if Christians restoring the word to its original import, viz. manhood, or manliness, used it exclusively to express the quality of fortitude ; strength of character in relation to the

resistance opposed by nature and the irrational passions to the dictates of reason ; energy of will in preserving the line of rectitude tense and firm against the warping forces and treacheries of temptation.—S. T. COLERIDGE.

When the apostle Peter exhorts all believers to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, he employs a word in the original Greek which signifies, *to lead a chorus or band of musicians*. The idea involved in the expression is, that perfect harmony should exist between all these virtues, as between the notes of a piece of music, each enhancing the effect of the other. There is harmony in colours as well as in sounds ; we see an example of it in every object of nature ; and when the proper hues are associated together, the complementary ones contrasting and harmonising with one another, the effect is exceedingly pleasing. As in the field of nature, so in the Christian character, all the graces should blend in such a way that the effect of the whole may be to the eye what sweet melody is to the ear.—J. MACMILLAN.

The progress of which St. Peter speaks is a development from within. It is not the impartation to a certain quality of a thing not originally there ; it is the unfolding from it of a thing which is latently there. It is the bringing out into bloom that life of the flower which sleeps already in the bud ; the expansion into meridian glory of the sunshine slumbering in the dawn. It is an exhortation to expand the life of the germ, to remember what possibilities are folded within the germ. This faith, in itself so small a thing, is declared to be the seed of all other things.—G. MATHESON.

It is a very uncommon word which we render " adding." It literally signifies, " bringing in by-the-by," or " over and above " ; implying that God works

the work; yet not unless we are diligent. Our diligence is to follow the gift of God, and is followed by an increase of all His gifts. The Greek word translated "supply" properly means "lead up," as in a dance, one of these after the other, in a beautiful order. *Your faith:* that "evidence of things not seen," termed before "the knowledge of God and of Christ," the root of all Christian graces. *Virtue* is the courage whereby ye may conquer all your enemies and difficulties. *Knowledge* is the wisdom which teaches you how to exercise your courage on all occasions. *Temperance and patience:* bear and forbear; sustain and abstain; deny yourself and take up the cross daily. *Godliness* is the proper support of patience, otherwise it may be pride, or stoicism. *Love of the brethren:* no sullenness, sternness, moroseness. *Love:* the pure and perfect love of God and of all mankind. The Apostle here makes an advance upon the preceding article, which seems only to relate to the love of Christians toward one another.—J. WESLEY.

Ye have a goodly heritage and a good field, take care that ye suffer no thistles and weeds to grow in it. Prudence is the eye of all virtues, without which virtue easily degenerates into faults.—LUTHER.

As in dancing they took hands, so we must join hand to hand in these measures or graces. Lead up to the dance of the graces, where everyone takes his turn.—E. LEIGH.

Let us make use of that measure of faith which God has given us, to beg of Him the increase, the perfection, and the strength thereof. If our faith is vigorous and full of virtue we shall not be overcome by our enemies, nor wander easily out of the right way.—QUESNEL.

THE DIVINE MESSAGE

THE MINISTRY OF REMEMBRANCE

Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you.

2 Pet. I. 12.

THIS is the office of the best ministers, even the apostles themselves; they are "the Lord's remembrancers" (Isa. lxii. 6); they are specially bound to make mention of the promises, and put God in mind of His engagements to do good to His people; and they are the people's remembrancers, making mention of God's precepts, and putting them in mind of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, that they may "remember God's commandments to do them."—M. HENRY.

It is a gracious prerogative that we can minister to one another in holy things. It is possible for one man to rouse another man's memory to the recollection of the things of the Spirit, and to revive his sense of the superlative grace and goodness of God. But this ministry of remembrancer is one that requires the utmost delicacy if its exercise is to be hallowed and fruitful. The phrase "to put you in remembrance" literally signifies to remind quietly, to mention it under one's breath, to gently suggest it. We can rouse some people quite easily by drawing up the blinds and letting in the light. There is no occasion for the rattle of artillery; it is quite enough to let the sunshine in.—J. H. JOWETT.

Anything in religion that professes to be new, beyond the light which modern researches into the geography and natural history, the manners, customs, and languages of the East, may throw on the contents of the Bible, is to be regarded with grave suspicion.

T. GUTHRIE.

THE WORD OF PROPHECY

And we have the word of prophecy made *more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

2 Pet. I. 19.

TO refer the words "until the day dawn" to the time of the Lord's return is objectionable, because thus (1) the time of the Christian's walk here, which is said to be light in the Lord, would, not comparatively, but absolutely, be described as a walking in darkness by the slender light of Old Testament prophecy; (2) the morning-star arising in men's hearts is not a description which can apply to the Lord's return. So that whatever apparent analogy there may be with the comparison used in Rom. xiii. 11 ff. the matters treated of seem to be different. At the same time it may well be that the Apostle should have mingled both ideas together as he wrote the words; seeing that even in our hearts the fullness of the spiritual day will not have arisen until that time when we see face to face, and know even as God knew us.

H. ALFORD.

The shepherd's lamp burns dim, fades to a tiny spark, and the heavens grow lucid round it, for the long vigil is over, and the day is here. Even so, says Peter, God gave the lamps of prophecy in the world's great night. Through long ages the prophets, those lonely lamp-bearers, lighting the world's advance, did their duty: until at last the morning-star of Christ appeared, the day of God broke over Bethlehem and Calvary, and the light of the world had come.

W. J. DAWSON.

"Shining in a *waste* place" would perhaps be

safer ; and the image would then be that prophecy is like camp-fires in the desert, which may keep one from going utterly astray, till sunrise frees one from difficulty. The " waste place " is either the wilderness of this world or the tangled life of the imperfect Christian.

A. PLUMMER.

Divine truth has been revealed to us, not in a law of the letter, not in a digested summary of specific articles of faith, but in this historical embodiment, this application to individual cases, to specific historical circumstances and social relations, imparted through the instrumentality of individual men, who lived as depositaries of Divine truth among their fellow-men ; who, in the common intercourse of human life, testified of and revealed the Divine, speaking and acting as men, each in his own peculiar human manner, though hallowed indeed by the Spirit of God. Thus was Divine truth to be brought humanly near to us.—NEANDER.

The manner of the revelation of prophecy is not always ecstatic ; it may also consist only in that the willing, the thinking, and the feeling Spirit-life of the prophet in a state of full and waking self-power is raised and borne along by a gentle, Divine influence.

DELITZSCH.

The Jewish converts searched the Scriptures to see if the things spoken by the Apostles did agree with what was before written by the prophets. They are commended for attending even to this lesser light till they attained to greater degrees of illumination and the day-star of the knowledge of Christ did arise in their hearts.—M. POOLE.

Until your hearts be fully enlightened by the spirit of Christ and the shadows of the law no longer darken your path.—DIODATI.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

THE TIMELESSNESS OF GOD

But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

2 Pet. III. 8.

WHAT is it, then, that we ascertain by the contemplation of such a fact as this? It is that Time regulates our outer life but it has no power over our mind. It is that whether we recognise it or not there is an immortal part in us, even as the wise writer of Ecclesiastes said, " also God hath set eternity in the heart of man." It is that beyond all other things we see that love knows nothing of Time—for the love we had for the dead mother or the child we still have—not a pang is lost, not a kiss forgotten; years have altered nothing, for " love is not love that alteration knows." Now see, then, how things fit in with this truth. What is God? God is love, is the sublime reply. What is love? Love is an emotion without limit; it knows neither past nor future, it is an eternal Now.—W. J. DAWSON.

The sum of Peter's words is, the *age-measurer* (so to speak) of God differs from the *hour-reckoner* of mortals. His gnomon shows at once all hours in the greatest activity and in the greatest repose. To him the times pass away neither more slowly nor more quickly than is befitting to Him and to His economy. There is no reason why He should consider it needful either to delay or to hasten the end.—BENGEL.

The longest time is only brief after God's measure; yet it hastens and rushes irresistibly into eternity, just because it is time.—R. E. STIER.

God hath not made a creature that can comprehend Him; 'tis the privilege of His own nature. I am that I

am, was His own definition unto Moses ; and 'twas a short one to confound mortality, that durst question God or ask Him what He was ; indeed, He only is ; all others have been and shall be, but in eternity there is no distinction of tenses. Peter speaks modestly when he saith a thousand years to God are but as one day ; for those continued instances of time which flow into a thousand years make not to Him one moment ; what to us is to come, to His eternity is present, His whole duration being but one permanent point without succession, parts, or division.—T. BROWNE.

What is insisted on is simply this—that distinctions of long and short time are nothing in the sight of God ; delay is a purely human conception.—A. PLUMMER.

In order to take the right standpoint with regard to the coming of Christ we must apply the standard of eternity and not use human measures of time. God's relation to time is very different from that sustained by men, the creatures of a day.—G. F. C. FRONMÜLLER.

Moses had said, Ps. xc. 4, " A thousand years in Thy sight are as one day," which Peter applies to the last day. " One day is with the Lord as a thousand years," that is, in one moment He can do the work of a thousand years. Therefore He " is not slow " ; He is always equally ready to fulfil His promise. " And a thousand years are as one day," that is, no delay is long to God. In a word, with God time passes neither slower nor swifter than is suitable to Him ; nor can there be any reason why it should be necessary for Him either to delay or hasten the end of all things. How can we comprehend all this ? If we could comprehend it, Peter need not have added, " with the Lord."

J. WESLEY.

THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2 Pet. III. 10.

GOD grants *to men* many thousand days: one, and that the last, is the great day *of God* Himself.—BENGEL.

It will be unexpected; every judgment coming of Christ is like the springing of a mine.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

God has not made the worlds for eternity, like Himself, but they come and pass away. In the case of each world there was a time when it did not exist, and there will be a time when its place shall not be found. How distant soever the day of the destruction of our earth may be, when it does come there will be men on earth, like ourselves, occupied, as we are, with expectations and hopes of a long future. He that rolls up the heavens like a garment and scatters suns and earths like dust, He only is the Lord. Our science will never reach the laws which bring about the destruction of our earth.

SCHLEIERMACHER.

When the preserving and supporting power of God, which is, as it were, the soul of the world, shall separate itself from the macrocosm, it will fall together like a dead body.—GERHARD.

The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and Nature sink in years;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of Elements,
The wrecks of Matter, and the crush of Worlds.

ADDISON.

FINAL APPEAL

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.
2 *Pet. III.* 14.

THE words "give diligence" show plainly enough that a personal coming of the Lord, is in the view of the Apostle throughout, as connected with the proceedings of the great Day. The form of expression reminds us forcibly of Matt. xxii. 11 ff. It seems very probable that the parable of the wedding garment was floating before the Apostle's mind. "Without spot and blameless" are in reference to God; "in peace," in reference to their own state and lot: in peace *among* themselves, in peace *with* themselves, in peace *for* themselves, with God. But perhaps an expression so familiar to the Eastern tongue as "in peace" may have an onward as well as a present meaning, and be taken of that eternal peace of which all earthly peace is but a feeble foretaste.—H. ALFORD.

The pair of epithets, "spotless and blameless," should be noticed as coinciding with 1 Pet. i. 19, and also as forming a marked contrast to the false teachers, who are called "spots and blemishes" (2 Pet. ii. 13). "In peace" cannot well refer to differences between Jewish and Gentile Christians, a subject quite foreign to this Epistle. It may possibly refer to the false teachers and the discord caused by them; but more probably it has no special reference. It expresses at once the condition and the consequence of being "spotless and blameless." "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked."—A. PLUMMER.

Whether I eat or drink, or in whatever other action or employment I am engaged, that solemn voice always

seems to sound in my ears, " Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." As often as I think of the Day of Judgment, my heart quakes, and my whole frame trembles. If I am to indulge in any of the pleasures of the present life, I am resolved to do it in such a way that the solemn realities of the future judgment may never be banished from my recollection.—JEROME.

I have thought on it many a time, as a small emblem of that day, when I have seen a prevailing army drawing towards the towns and castles of the enemy. Oh! with what glad hearts do all the poor prisoners within hear the news and behold their approach! How do they run up to their prison windows, and thence behold their friends with joy! How glad are they at the roaring report of that cannon which is the enemy's terror! How do they clap each other on the back, and cry, " Deliverance! deliverance! " While, in the meantime, the late insulting, scorning, cruel enemies begin to speak them fair, and beg their favour; but all in vain, for they are not at the disposal of prisoners, but of the general. Their fair usage may make their conditions somewhat the more easy, but yet they are used as enemies still.—BAXTER.

O Land of Quiet! to thy shore the surf
Of the perturbèd Present rolls and sleeps;
Our storms breathe soft as June upon thy turf
And lure out blossoms; to thy bosom leaps,
As to a mother's, the o'erwearied heart,
Hearing far off and dim the toiling mart,
The hurrying feet, the curses without number,
And, circled with the glow Elysian
Of their exulting vision,
Out of its cares woos charms for peace and slumber.

LOWELL.

1 JOHN

FELLOWSHIP AND JOY

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.

1 *John I.* 3–4.

FELLOWSHIP denotes commerce and society in the same faith, religion, and Church, where all partake of the same sacraments. The Apostle unfolds the grandeur and nobility of the society of the Church, as being a fellowship with God and Christ, for the Church is His spouse.

CORN. À LAPIDE.

The fellowship of which St. John speaks is not only that peace and concord by which men are knit to their fellow-men, but that by which there is a vital, indissoluble union of men with God in soul and spirit by faith.

ZWINGLE.

He that rejoices in the Lord can never by anything accidental be deprived of it. For all other things which delight us are subject to change, nor can they afford us so much pleasure as to drive away and cast a shade over the sorrow which springs from other causes. But the fear of God is firm and immovable, and is the source of so much joy, that no sense of other evils can gain hold of us.—CHRYSOSTOM.

It is a joy which is not vouchsafed to the wicked, but to those who freely worship Thee. For Thou Thyself art their joy. And a happy life consists in rejoicing in Thee, and for Thee. There is no other joy but this, and they who think that there is another, follow after another kind of joy, and not the true one.—AUGUSTINE.

Fullness of joy arises from a full and abundant confirmation of the soul in faith and love.—BENGEL.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

GOD IS LIGHT

And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

1 *John I.* 5.

LIGHT unites in itself purity and clearness and beauty and glory as no other material object does : it is the condition of all material life and growth and joy. And the application to God of such a predicative requires no transference. He is light, and the Fountain of light material and light ethical. In the one world, darkness is the absence of light : in the other, darkness, untruthfulness, deceit, falsehood, is the absence of God. They who are in communion with God, and walk with God, are of the light, and walk in the light.—H. ALFORD.

This profound term designates perfect moral goodness, combined with blissful consciousness of His sanctity, in the sphere of the highest life, where the luminous clearness of the Divine Wisdom also rules as opposed to the world.—F. GODET.

No darkness, whether of mind or will or nature. This is said in opposition to the gnostics, who held two gods, one of light and one of darkness.—A. W. THOROLD.

Light has always been regarded by the common instinct of men as the emblem of absolute purity and absolute unity.—B. F. WESTCOTT.

Thou art the pilgrim's path, the blind man's eye,
The dead man's life : on thee my hopes rely ;
If thou remove, I err, I grope, I die.
Disclose thy sunbeams, close thy wings, and stay ;
See, see how I am blind, and dead, and stray,
O thou who art my light, my life, my way.

F. QUARLES.

FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 *John 1.* 8–9.

IT is ever God's truth and righteousness that are concerned in, and vindicated by, our redemption. His being faithful and just does not *depend* on our confessing our sins. He had both these attributes before, and will ever continue to have them; but by confessing our sins, we cast ourselves on, we approach and put to the proof for ourselves, and shall find operative in our case, in the forgiving and cleansing, those His attributes of faithfulness and justice. . . . God is *faithful* to His promise: is *just* in His dealing; and both attributes operate in the forgiveness of sins to the penitent, now and hereafter; and in cleansing them from all unrighteousness. The laws of His spiritual kingdom require this: by those laws He acts in holy and infinite justice. His promises announced it, and to those promises He is faithful: but then those promises were themselves made only in accordance with His nature, who is always holy, just, and true.

H. ALFORD.

Under the teaching of Satan men inverted God's order. For God has attached a sense of shame to sin, and given confidence to the confession of sin; but the devil attaches confidence to sin, and to confession shame. Penitence is contrition of heart, confession with the lips, and humility in every act.—CHRYSOSTOM.

No man was ever kept out of God's Kingdom for his confessed badness; but many for their supposed goodness.—J. TRAPP.

CHRIST THE ADVOCATE

And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.
1 *John II.* 1-2.

A PARACLETE (Advocate) is one who is called in to aid, by his good word or countenance, him whose cause is to be examined, or whose petition is to be considered. The word occurs five times in the New Testament; four times (in St. John's Gospel) of the Holy Ghost; once (in this verse) of Christ.—J. W. ALEXANDER.

What now is the practical significance of this truth, that Christ, the Holy, is our ever-abiding Advocate with the Father? To this perpetual mediation through the living Christ, to His ever-abiding priesthood for those who are reconciled to God through Him, corresponds the ever-remaining need of mediation in believers, their constant dependence upon the priesthood of Christ, in union with whom they are a generation consecrated to God. Under every feeling of sin and infirmity, in all their temptations and conflicts, they may securely trust in their indissoluble union with this Divine human Personage, who Himself has felt all their necessities and is near to them in the intimate sympathy of perfect love. Moreover, their whole inward and outward Christian life, flowing as it does from this sense of continual need of redemption, will take its character from this ever-continuing mediation of Christ, and their own conscious connection therewith.—NEANDER.

Mark St. John's humility. He says not "*ye* have"; nor "ye have *me*"; nor even "*ye* have *Christ*," but "*we* have," placing himself in the rank of sinners.—AUGUSTINE.

THE FELLOWSHIP

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

1 *John II.* 10–11.

THE guiding light of the Christian walk is love.

NEANDER.

In him who loves, there is neither blindness nor an occasion of stumbling: in him who does not love, there is both blindness and an occasion of stumbling. He who hates his brother is a stumbling-block to himself, and stumbles against himself and everything within and without: he who loves has a path free from obstacles. The opposition is direct. Where there is not love there is hatred; the heart is not empty.—BENGEL.

First is asserted the incompatibility of living in hatred and walking in the light: then the identity of walking in love and walking in the light: then lastly as a contrast to the last, the same fact with regard to hatred and the darkness, and the blinding effect on him who walks in it. The light is the light of Christ, now partially shining, but one day to be fully revealed: the darkness is the darkness of this present world, now passing away. The light and the darkness by which we walk safely, or stumble, are within ourselves, admitted into us by the eye, whose singleness fills the whole body with light.—H. ALFORD.

If thou hast begun to be a man of light, do the things of Christ, for He is our Light and day. Why rushest thou into the darkness of anger? Why wrappest thou thyself in a mist of envy? Why dost thou extinguish every spark of peace and charity?—CYPRIAN.

WORLDLINESS

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

1 *John II.* 15.

WORLDLINESS consists in these three things—attachment to the Outward—attachment to the Transitory—attachment to the Unreal: in opposition to love for the Inward, the Eternal, the True: any one of these affections is necessarily expelled by the other. If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. But let a man once feel the power of the kingdom that is within, and then the love fades of that emotion whose life consists only in the thrill of a nerve, or the vivid sensation of a feeling: he loses his happiness and wins his blessedness. Let a man get but one glimpse of the King in His beauty, and then the forms and shapes of things here are to him but the types of an invisible loveliness: types which he is content should break and fade. Let a man but feel truth—that goodness is greatness—that there is no other greatness—and then the degrading reverence with which the titled of this world bow before wealth, and the ostentation with which the rich of this world profess their familiarity with title—all the pride of life, what is it to him? The love of the Inward—Everlasting, Real—the love, that is, of the Father, annihilates the love and worship of the world.

F. W. ROBERTSON.

That which does not abide for ever is not worthy of our love; for God has created, appointed, and called us unto eternal things.—P. J. SPENER.

Meditation has taught all men in all ages that this world is after all but a show—a phenomenon or appearance, no real thing.—CARLYLE.

ANTICHRISTS

Even now have there arisen many antichrists; . . . This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son.

1 *John II.* 18, 22.

EVERY one of his own will is either an antichrist or in Christ; either one of His members, or among the evil humours. He that changeth himself for the better is a member of the Body, but he that abideth in his wickedness is an evil humour, and when he is gone out, they who were oppressed will be relieved.—AUGUSTINE.

The antichrists denied that Jesus, the definite Person whom the Apostles had seen, heard, and handled, is the Christ. In whatever sense this denial is to be taken, there is involved in it a denial of the Son of God; because it is only as the Incarnate Son of God that Jesus is the Christ. And in the denial of the Son is involved necessarily the denial of the Father, since the Father cannot be known without the Son, and the Father cannot be perceived, believed on, loved, by any man, without the Son. So that in John's development of the argument there are three essentially connected points: denial of the Christ, of the Son, of the Father. The middle link of the chain, the denial of the Son of God, shows how the denial of the Father is of necessity involved in the denial of the Christ.—H. ALFORD.

Those who deny the Son cancel their own right to be called "sons of God": they *ipso facto* excommunicate themselves from the great Christian family in which Christ is the Brother, and God is the Father, of all believers.—A. PLUMMER.

We know God as Father through knowing Christ as Son.—A. L. HUMPHRIES.

CHILDREN OF GOD

LIKENESS TO GOD

We shall be like him ; for we shall see him even as he is.
1 *John III.* 2.

OBSERVE the connection between likeness to God and seeing God. Mark the Apostle's argument : No man can see God as He really is unless he resemble Him in character. . . . To see God you must first be like Him. You see Him, feel Him, believe in His existence, just in proportion as you resemble Him in goodness. You have the witness in yourself.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

The inward eye alone beholds that mighty beauty. But if it approach the vision bleared by vices, unpurified, or weak through cowardice, so that it cannot bear to gaze upon such glory, then it sees nothing, even though another should be at hand to point out that which all may see. For he that beholds must be akin to that which he beholds, and must, before he comes to this vision, be transformed into its likeness. Never could the eye have looked upon the sun had it not become sun-like, and never can the soul see beauty unless she has become beautiful. Let each man first become god-like and each man beautiful, if he would behold beauty and God.—PLOTINUS.

Great things we have in hand, but greater in hope ; much in possession, but more in reversion.—J. TRAPP.

Man becomes one spirit with God, not merely by unity of will, but more expressly by not being able to will anything beside, through union with His power.
BERNARD.

That holy, great and glorious mystery
Will there revealed be in majesty,
By light and comfort of spiritual grace.
BEN JONSON.

BROTHERLY LOVE

Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

1 *John III.* 10–11.

HE who does not love his brother has in strict fact *no brother to love*, for he is not a child of God at all.—H. ALFORD.

Love alone distinguishes between the children of God and the children of the devil. Let all sign themselves with the sign of the cross, let all answer Amen, let all sing Alleluia, let all be baptized, let all go to Church, let all build churches. Yet the sons of God are distinguished from the children of the devil only by charity. They who have charity are born of God, they who have it not are not born of God. Have what thou wilt ; if this alone thou have not, it profiteth thee nothing. If thou hast not anything else, have this : thou hast fulfilled the law.—AUGUSTINE.

Charity is the mother of men and angels, bringing peace, not only to all things in earth, but even in heaven.

GREGORY THE GREAT.

The unflinching truthfulness and courage of St. John are nowhere more remarkable than in the pertinacity with which, amongst the perversions of human affection which are the blot of all societies, and were especially flagrant in the ancient world, he urges his friends to brotherly love. Love is the fulfilling of the law, the proof of union with God, the sign of having passed from death unto life, the great commandment of Christ, the outcome of birth from God, the witness of God's presence, the perfection and crown of our love to Him : the absence of it is the mark of spiritual death.

W. M. SINCLAIR.

THE LIGHT OF LOVE

Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.

1 *John IV.* 7.

IT is obviously impossible to love all men in any strict and true sense. What is meant by loving all men, is to feel well-disposed to all men, to be ready to assist them, and to act towards those who come in our way as if we loved them. We cannot love those about whom we know nothing ; except indeed we view them in Christ, as the objects of His Atonement, that is rather in faith than in love. And love, besides, is a habit, and cannot be attained without actual practice, which on so large a scale is impossible. We see, then, how absurd it is, when writers (as is the manner of some who slight the Gospel) talk magnificently about loving the whole human race with a comprehensive affection, of being the friends of all mankind, and the like. Such vaunting professions, what do they come to ? that such men have certain benevolent feelings towards the world—feelings and nothing more ; nothing more than unstable feelings, the mere offspring of an indulged imagination, which exist only when their minds are wrought upon, and are sure to fail them in the hour of need. This is not to love men, but to talk about love. The real love of man must depend on practice, and therefore must begin by exercising itself on our friends around us. Otherwise it will have no existence. By trying to love our relations and friends, by submitting to their wishes, though contrary to our own, by bearing with their infirmities, by overcoming their occasional waywardness by kindness, by dwelling on their excellences, and trying to

copy them, thus it is that we form in our hearts that root of charity which, though small at first, may, like the mustard-seed, at last even overshadow the earth.
J. H. NEWMAN.

Between God and man, the interpreter is love. Love renders intelligible to man the truths of the Gospel —not indeed those abstract truths which relate to the essence of God, the knowledge of which is equally inaccessible and useless to us, but those other truths which concern our relations to God, and constitute the very foundation of religion. Let love, sweet, gracious, luminous, interpreting, come between the Gospel and the human soul and the truth of the Gospel shall have a meaning, and one as clear as it is profound. Then shall your soul find itself free and happy in the midst of these strange revelations. Then shall those truths you have accepted, through submission and obedience, become to you as familiar and as necessarily true as those common, every-day truths upon which depends your existence.—VINET.

Brotherly love is that desire for the good of others, temporal and eternal, without which self-denial and self-sacrifice are but barren pride. Like St. Paul, it knows no man after the flesh—that is, for mere fancy, pleasure, or advantage—but is the instant recognition of merit and of God's good gifts wherever they may present themselves. Founded on faith and measured by it, it is absolutely pure and unselfish ; it would lay down life itself for the good of others. And because it is that attitude of the human mind towards its fellows which is the reflex of God's mind towards us, it embraces and implies all human virtues.—W. M. SINCLAIR.

In faith and hope the world will disagree,
But all mankind's concern is charity.—POPE.

THE HEART OF THE ETERNAL

God is love.

1 *John IV.* 8.

THIS brief sentence imparted to John, even during the mere time which he took in writing it, more delight than the whole world can impart.—BENGEL.

Love is the very essence, not merely an attribute of God. It is co-essential with Him: he who has not love has not God. Take this as a strict definition of God, and the argumentation will be strict: He that loveth not never knew love: God is love (the terms are co-essential and co-extensive): therefore he who loveth not never knew God.—H. ALFORD.

This was the main cause of Christ's coming, that man might know how much God loves him, and to know it to this end, that he might be kindled with affection for Him who loved him first, and might love his neighbour at the bidding of Him who became man's neighbour by loving him when he was no neighbour, but one sojourning far away.—AUGUSTINE.

To know this is to know all. It is to know that this world is not a chaos but a cosmos. It is to know that our earthly career is not without reason nor without end. It is to know that man, even in the depth of his fall, is a being whose nature God honours. It is to know the true name of prosperity, which is grace; and of distress, which is trial.—VINET.

The everlasting love was disclosed by our Lord's life and death. It showed that God forgives because He loves to forgive. He works by smiles, if possible; if not, by frowns.—DAVID LIVINGSTONE.

God, thou art love! I build my faith on that.

BROWNING.

THE PERFECTING OF LOVE

Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear.

1 *John IV.* 17–18.

THE condition of men is varied: without fear and love; with fear without love; with fear and love; without fear with love.—BENGEL.

We lose fear because our love apprehends that great gospel and blessed hope, that God's love is mine, mine in His Son, that my love may be perfectly fixed upon it, mine without fear of loss or harm from anything. Believing this, the heart fills with a mighty tide of calm, responding love, which sweeps away on the crest of its rejoicing wave the sorrows, the fears, which once choked its channels. They are flooded out, and the heart is delivered. We stand peaceful, safe, blessed. Whatever betide, nothing can separate us from the love of God. We are bound to Him by that everlasting loving-kindness with which He has drawn us. There is lifted off the heart the whole burden of "fearful looking-for of judgment," the whole burden arising from the dark thought, God is mighty, God *must be* righteous, God may strike! because we know "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Henceforth our thoughts of God are to be thoughts of perfect, absolute, everlasting love, who is the foundation of our life, and the basis of all our hope and work. The love of God casts out the fear of God, and the love of God casts out *all other fear!*

A. MACLAREN.

A man dreads the coming of Christ only in proportion as he distrusts his own charity.—QUESNEL.

LOVE'S COMMANDMENT

This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.
1 *John IV.* 21.

THAT same love, first wholly carried to God, is not divided or impaired by the love of our brethren. God allows, commands, yea, causes, that it stream forth and act itself toward them; remaining still in Him as in its source and centre; beginning at Him and returning to Him; loving our brethren in God and for Him; not only because He commands us to love them, but because in loving our brethren after a Christian manner we do even in that love our God.—ABP. LEIGHTON.

God would have me love my neighbour exactly as He loves me, fastening my regard upon his true self, upon the feature of God's image which is reflected in his soul, and bearing with his infirmities out of this esteem for the true self. Must it not be practicable? It is what He is constantly doing to me.

E. M. GOULBURN.

Our love to our brethren is not only the evidence but the measure of our love to Christ. He that hath not love enough in him for a man like himself, how can he love God, whose goodness, being above our knowledge, requireth a transcendency in our love? This is a sure rule, He that loveth not a member of Christ loveth not Christ; and he who groweth in his love to his brethren groweth likewise in his love to Christ.—BP. REYNOLDS.

You cannot compel light to shine in one direction, or on one side only. It will radiate all around. So will true love. Upward to God it is reverence and worship; abroad among the good it is brotherly love; among the bad the kindness of pity.—J. HALL.

FAITH IS VICTORY

And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.

1 *John V.* 4.

OBSERVE that faith is spoken of, not merely as the *means* of victory, but as a *victory* in itself. There is something very noble in this deep, silent, unexcited triumph—our faith *is* a victory!

W. M. SINCLAIR.

Faith reaches things inaccessible, discovers the unknown, comprehends the infinite, seizes the remotest bounds of things, and in short embraces eternity itself in its own most spacious bosom.—BERNARD.

Faith is the energy of the soul and the energy of life. We do not go too far in saying that it is the point of departure for all action, since to act is to quit the firm position of the present and stretch the hand into the future. But this at least is certain, that faith is the source of everything in the eyes of man which bears a character of dignity and force. Vulgar souls wish to see, to touch, to grasp; others have the eye of faith, and they are great. It is always by having faith in others, in themselves, in duty, or in the Divinity, that men have done great things. Faith has been, in all time, the strength of the feeble and the salvation of the miserable. And Christian faith is the victory over the world, since it contains all the elements of a holy life.

VINET.

This is the victory, by which the martyrs overcame, by which the weak became strong, and, in Divine strength, mastered the strong; the strength of endurance wearied out the brutal might of affliction; children overcame their oppressor; the ignorant took captive the learning of the world; fishermen and the tent-

maker subdued the world ; the dying conquered the living ; the blood of martyrs became the harvest-seed of the Church. For faith knits us to Christ ; faith obtains for us the power of Christ ; faith prevails with Him who is Almighty, and overcomes the world, for it has power with Him who has power over the world. Faith binds us to Him, who is Almighty ; but faith, too, opens our own eyes to things invisible. It imparts to us of the power of the All-Powerful, of the wisdom of the All-Wise. It gives us to see the nothingness of all things which are but for a time. It opens our eyes to the majesty and beauty of things eternal. What to us are things which perish in the grasp ? What to us are things of time and sense, save as they speak of that which lives when time shall cease to be, or as they shall themselves live on, purified but indestructible ? One only is above us, He who made us. All we see is below us. His friends we may be, His we have been made, who is Lord of the world. The world itself, and all which is in the world, is for our use, subject to us, as we to God. All things beautiful to sight, sweet to taste, transporting in sound, pleasant to smell, and thrilling to touch, all things are ours and for us, if used in obedience to their and our Maker. But we are above them. They were made for us, not we for them, to be slaves to them. E. B. Pusey.

The world is destined to be conquered, judged, and destroyed as to its transitory and corruptible side, but to become more and more blessed as to its Divine side, and this has been done in Christ and through Christ in believers, so that it is one and the same thing to say : the Son of God conquers the world through our faith, and our faith conquers the world through Him.—Schleiermacher.

ASSURANCE OF LIFE

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.

1 *John V.* 13.

ETERNAL life is the life which God Himself lives, and has lived from all eternity, and in which He has His blessedness; whose thought is truth, and its force life, and its nature love. As *truth* it contains and declares the essence and substance and relation of all things; as *light* it makes manifest by the very force and acting of its nature; as *love* it finds its joy and satisfaction, even at the cost of infinite sacrifice, in going out of itself for the sake of others.—A. W. THOROLD.

Few Christians *know* the excellency of the grace which includes in it the right to eternal life, which plants the principle and root thereof in our hearts, and is the beginning and rough draft of it below, as glory is its consummation and perfection. What can that person value in the world who believes this truth? And how can anyone flatter himself with being a Christian who believes it not?—QUESNEL.

Not a certainty of hope only, but of faith too; even a full assurance, in the pledges and first-fruits of it, and in the true graces of the Spirit whereof there are marks and evidences in all believers.—J. TRAPP.

Thou foul deception of all men
That would not have the true come on.
Thou art a toilsome mole, or less,
A moving mist;
But life is, what none can express,
A quickness which my God hath kissed.

HENRY VAUGHAN.

THE CONFIRMATION OF PRAYER

And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

1 *John V.* 14–15.

BY the continual feeling of submission to God's will, joined with continual increase in knowledge of that will, our prayers will be both chastened and directed aright. If we knew His will thoroughly, and submitted to it heartily, it would be impossible for us to ask anything for the spirit, or for the body, which He should not hear and perform. And it is this ideal state, as always, which the Apostle has in view.—H. ALFORD.

Outward diversions may break the reverential intimacy of our communion with Him; the chill of worldliness may cool the pulse of fervent desire; but if the will yet moves needle-like to the one blessed point, the holy will of Jesus, and rests there, the deepest condition of prevailing prayer is realised.—A. J. GOULBURN.

The just person is always *heard*, because he desires nothing but the will of God, and thereto submits all his desires. God *hears* us in delaying to give that which is not profitable for us to receive, or in refusing to give that which is contrary to sanctification. The whole *confidence* of a Christian in prayer depends on this, that he is a child of God, and that a father never denies anything to his child, while he lives and asks him as he ought. The prayer of a true Christian is without any fond affection for the thing desired, and his expectation without inquietude, since he knows that He of whom he would fain be heard is the very same who causes him to pray.—QUESNEL.

THE CERTAINTY OF REDEMPTION

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.

1 John V. 18–19.

IN an age when the purifying influences of the Spirit had no operation beyond the walls of the Church—and when, moreover, within those limits the Gospel was exerting its fullest influence—Christians, conscious as they were of both hopes and virtues to which none but themselves could pretend, were liable to no embarrassment in taking up the Apostle's profession, "we know that we are of God." While the Church and the world are in any such relative position, each exhibits its proper internal quality in the most conspicuous manner. Purity belongs to one, shameless confusion to the other. The last living Apostle in the age of Trajan looked abroad upon the Roman world and must, inspiration apart, boldly decide between the friendsand foes of His master.—I. TAYLOR.

In actual life, even our brethren, even we ourselves, born of God, shall sin, not unto death, and require brotherly intercession; but in the depth and truth of the Christian life, sin is altogether absent. It is the world, not knowing God, which lies under the power of the wicked one: God's new-begotten children he cannot touch: they are in and they know the True One, and in Him have eternal life. . . . As the Prince of this world had nothing in our blessed Lord, even so on His faithful ones who live by His life the Tempter has no *point d'appui*, by virtue of that birth by which they are as He is.—H. ALFORD.

God is his buckler.—QUESNEL.

2 JOHN

GREETING

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever. Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

2 John 1–3.

IF the name of the matron is not given, it is not absurd to suppose that the dangers of the times, or family persecution, may have made it advisable that both her name and that of the writer should be withheld. The messenger would supply both deficiencies. The term "lady" would not imply anything about her social station. Epictetus says that all women above fourteen were addressed by men in this term.—W. M. SINCLAIR.

"Grace" has reference to the *sins* of men, "mercy" to their *misery*. God's free grace and gift is extended to men as they are guilty; His mercy is extended to them as they are miserable. Thus grace always comes first, because guilt must be done away, before misery can be assuaged.—R. C. TRENCH.

Peace is the whole sum and substance of the possession and enjoyment of God's grace and mercy. Truth and love are the conditional element in which the grace, mercy, and peace are to be received and enjoyed.

H. ALFORD.

The love is not only true love, but it rests on the truth of the Gospel. They who love in truth, also love on account of truth.—BENGEL.

God deems none worthy of peace or grace who do not deem themselves unworthy of either or both.

STARKE.

COUNSEL OF LOVE

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments.

2 John 5–6.

PERFECT love naturally seeks nothing, and claims nothing for itself, but all for the beloved ; if this be so with earthly love, how much more with the love of God.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

Love absorbs all the acts of the soul.

ROBERT OF LINCOLN.

Love here is left undefined and nothing is said beyond its being exhibited in our walking according to the commandments of God ; so that the reference is neither to love of the brethren, nor love of God, but to love in general.—J. P. LANGE.

What he meant was, that this is the paramount and crowning duty of the Christian believer. He did not say, " Agree with one another in doctrine." He did not even say, " Teach one another, inform one another." What he did urge was that difficult but necessary grace, " Love one another." That is, love one another in spite of your differences, in spite of your faults ; do what you can to serve each other, to lighten each other's trials and inconveniences and burdens ; above all, if we may turn the precept into its most practical form, make the best of one another.

A. P. STANLEY.

But the love—*the charity*—what is it ? Walking according to His *commandments*. But *the* commandment, which includes all commandments—what is it ?—Why, the *Love !* The Love expanded issues in the commandments.—J. W. ALEXANDER.

COUNSEL OF WARNING

Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.

2 John 8.

THERE is no half reward of the saints; it is lost altogether, or received in full.

BENGEL.

"We have no suspicion," says a famous French Protestant, "that pardon is not the restoration of health—it is only the crisis of convalescence." Much remains to be done before the last traces of my deadly malady are expelled, and before my whole being tingles with joyous vitality and power. Therefore it is that I must look to myself. I am to ask whether the renewed nature which God the Spirit bestows on me prospers and advances from strength to strength; whether the blessed Spirit has abundant room and uninterrupted scope to carry forward His labours; whether I may not be grieving Him by my carelessness and evil; whether, as Faber sings, "of lowly thoughts and simple ways I build a nest for Him." Day by day I must look to see that He controls me altogether. This look has great issues. It results in a full reward. . . . Here there are, for the disciple who reverences the Lord the Spirit, the triumph over temptation, the nearer communion with God, and the healing virtue which renews and refreshes many. And hereafter, the indolent Christian cannot have so shining a diadem, and so lofty a place, as the Christian to whom the Holy Ghost has been meat and drink and sun and rain and native air. He will not dwell so close to the heavenly Throne, nor enjoy so much of the presence of the Lord.—A. SMELLIE.

We lose all for want of perseverance.—QUESNEL.

JUDE

ADDRESS AND GREETING

Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

Jude 1–2.

THE plan of the Epistle, short as it is, is evidently laid with considerable care; and the writer betrays a fondness for threefold divisions which is quite remarkable. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that wherever a group of three is possible he makes one. One or two of the triplets may be accidental, but the majority of them can hardly be so. There are ten (or possibly twelve) groups of three in this short Epistle of 25 verses: viz. (1 and 2) verse 1; (3) verse 2; (4) verse 4; (5) verses 5–7; (6) verse 8; (7) verse 11; (8) verses 12–15, 16–18, 19; (9) verse 19; (10) verses 20, 21; (11) verses 22, 23; (12) verse 25. Of these (4) and (10) are perhaps doubtful; but there can be no question about the rest, although the last two are obscured in the English version.—A. PLUMMER.

To be preserved uninjured for Christ is a subject of joy. The sources and completion of salvation are pointed out: and this passage has a kind of an anticipatory precaution, lest the righteous should be alarmed by the mention of dreadful evils. *Calling* is altogether the prerogative of Divine bounty. In a time of wretchedness it is mercy that is put in the first place: *the mercy* of Jesus Christ, ver. 21; *peace*, in the Holy Spirit, comp. ver. 20; *love* of God, ver. 21.—BENGEL.

Christ was appointed to be their King, Head, and Keeper, the "Author and Finisher" of their faith, and was furnished with power for their protection and security.—M. POOLE.

DEFENCE OF THE FAITH

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

Jude 3.

THAT St. Jude lays much stress on the fact that the sum total of the Gospel, and not merely the elementary portions of it, have been once for all committed to the Church, is shown, not only by the prominence which he gives to the thought here, but by his repetition of it a few lines later, when he begins the main portion of his Epistle : " I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all " (ver. 5). Any teaching of new doctrines is not only unnecessary, it is also utterly inadmissible. And every Christian has his responsibilities in this matter. He is to " contend earnestly," with all the energy and watchfulness of an athlete in the arena, for the preservation of this sacred deposit, lest it be lost or corrupted. And the manner in which this earnest contest is to be maintained is not left doubtful ; not with the sword, as Beza rightly remarks, nor with intemperate denunciation or indiscriminate severity, but with the mighty influence of a holy life, built upon the foundation of our " most holy faith " (vv. 20–3). It is in this way that lawful development of Christian doctrine is secured ; not by additions to what was once for all delivered, but by a deeper and wider comprehension of its inexhaustible contents.—A. PLUMMER.

The faith delivered to Christendom is the treasure for the unimpaired possession and enjoyment of which we must fight all the subtle and hostile forces of unrighteousness.—R. E. STIER.

THE EVERLASTING SANCTUARY

Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.
Jude 20.

THE expression "building up" is in the New Testament never used of actual building, but always in the metaphorical sense of believers being united together so as to form a temple. In this temple Christ is sometimes regarded as the foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11), sometimes as that which binds the structure together (Eph. ii. 20; Col. ii. 7). "The faith" here is the foundation on which the structure is to rest. It is not the internal grace or virtue of faith, but "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." It is "your faith" because it has thus been delivered to you; and it is "most holy," in marked contrast to the vile and shifty doctrines which the libertines profess and hold.

God's love is the region in which those who are built up on faith, and supported by prayer, may continually dwell. By prayer in the Spirit we are kept in the love of the Father.—A. PLUMMER.

As in a chain, which is made of many links, if you pull the first, you draw the rest; and as in a ladder of many staves if you take away the lowest, all hope of ascending to the highest will be removed; so because all the precepts and promises in the law and the Gospel do hang upon this, *Believe*; and because the last of the graces of God doth not follow the first, St. Jude exhorteth us to *build ourselves*, mentioneth here expressly only faith, as the thing wherein we must be edified; for that faith is the ground and the glory of all the welfare of this building.—T. HOOKER.

The way to build up yourselves is to pray through the power of the Holy Ghost.—E. LEIGH.

SURSUM CORDA!

Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be *glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.*

Jude 24–25.

IT is those who know their own frailty and liability to sin; who know the manifold temptations which surround them, and the terrible attractiveness which many of them can present; who know from past experience what frequent and grievous falls are possible; that can best understand the statement of fact which this doxology contains, and the significance of it. He who can guard such creatures as we are from stumbling, in such a world as this, must be the only God; must be He who was, and is, and is to come; must possess throughout all time and all eternity the highest powers and glories which the heart of man can conceive. The wonders of the material universe impress us in our more solemn moments with feelings of awe and reverence, and love for Him who is the Author of them all. How much more should the wonders of the kingdom of heaven do so! Out of sinful man to make a saint is more than to make a world out of nothing; and to keep sinful men from stumbling is more than to keep the stars in their courses. There is a free and rebellious will to be won and retained in the one case, whereas there is nothing but absolute and unresisting obedience in the other.—A. PLUMMER.

O my God, by whose loving Providence, sorrows, difficulties, trials, dangers, become means of grace, lessons of patience, channels of hope, grant us good will

to use and not abuse these our privileges ; and, of Thy great goodness, keep us alive through this dying life, that out of death Thou mayest raise us up to immortality.

CHRISTINA A. ROSSETTI.

It were not worth while to live in a world devoid of God and Providence.—FLAVEL.

It is a heaven upon earth when a man's mind rests upon Providence, moves in Charity, and turns upon the poles of Truth.—BACON.

He that beholds all from on high
Knows better what to do than I.
I'm not mine own : should I repine
If He dispose of what's not mine ?
Purge but thy soul of blind self-will,
Thou straight shalt see God doth no ill.
The world He fills with the bright rays
Of His free goodness. He displays
Himself throughout. Like common air
That spirit of life through all doth fare,
Suck'd in by them as vital breath,
That willingly embrace not death.
But those that with that living Law
Be unacquainted, cares do gnaw ;
Mistrust of God's good providence
Doth daily vex their wearied sense.—MORE.

Roaming in thought over the universe,
I saw the little that is Good
Steadily hastening towards its immortality,
And the vast all that is called Evil
I saw hastening
To merge itself to become lost and dead.

WALT WHITMAN.

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES

BY

J. F. McFADYEN, D.D.

THE
THIRD
STUDY

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A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES

By J. F. McFadyen, D.D.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

SIMPLE and straightforward as this document seems to be, it has given rise to some of the most baffling problems connected with the New Testament. For an understanding of this booklet, we must first have some idea of the class of literature to which it belongs. We know it as an " epistle " ; yet, were it not for the opening verse, we should never suspect it to be an epistle. There are no indications of those intimate relations between writer and readers with which we are familiar in Paul's epistles. Apart from the first verse, we learn nothing of the author except by inference, and even of the readers the picture we get is of the vaguest. The document is addressed, not to a particular church, but to " the Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion." Since the Christians claimed to be the true Israel of God and the inheritors of the promises, presumably this phrase means " the Christian communities scattered throughout the world."

In reading James, we are reminded now of the brief, pithy moral maxims of Jesus as recorded in the first three Gospels (" Whoever, then, would be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy," iv. 4), now of the stern denunciations of the Old Testament prophets (as at the beginning of chapter v.), and again of the Jewish Wisdom literature, of which Proverbs is the best-known example (" Whoso controlleth himself in speech is a perfect man able to control his whole body as well," iii. 2). But perhaps the kind of

writing to which James is most clearly parallel is the diatribe. Plato had put his philosophical works into the form of dialogues. But many teachers adopted a curious form of the dialogue in which all the speaking was done by one person, the teacher, while the other party to the dialogue was imaginary.

The object of the introduction of this imaginary companion was to enable the teacher, in his name, to bring forward objections to his argument (e.g. " but someone will say," ii. 18), objections which, of course, are brought forward only to be refuted. The device also gives the teacher the opportunity of using the vivid imperative as to people actually present. " Come now, you who say : To-day or to-morrow we shall go into such-and-such a city " (iv. 13). " Come now, ye rich men " (v. 1). This is far more vivid than would be abstract warnings against the self-confidence that forgets the uncertainty of life, and against the miserly hoarding of ill-gotten wealth. These semi-dialogues in which the teacher alone actually speaks are known as " diatribes."

If James, then, is not a personal letter but belongs to a well-known class of literature in which a teacher utters pithy words of wisdom on various topics, various results follow which are important for the understanding of the book. For one thing, we are only wasting time when we try to find any thread of argument running through the booklet, or any logical arrangement of the material. There is a kind of connection between the verses in each group of sayings ; e.g. " respect of persons " is discussed in ii. 1–9, and " the tongue " in chapter 3 ; but in the booklet as a whole there is no attempt at unity. Further, there is not much point in asking whether the cruel and greedy rich men of ii. 6 f.,

or of v. 1 ff., or the traders of iv. 13 were Christians, Jews, or Gentiles. In Wisdom writings of this kind the warnings are quite general, though they will always have reference to the moral conditions of the time.

Some of the questions that have been most keenly discussed in connection with James are of interest largely because they compel us to a more thorough study of the " epistle " itself. Much has been written on the question of authorship. The Church tradition has been that the writing is the work of James, the brother of Jesus, but the author himself makes no such claim (i. 1). Whether this James knew enough Greek to write a document of this kind we do not know. Hardly any New Testament writing was longer in finding general acceptance by the Church, which is at least strange if it was known from the beginning to have had an origin so distinguished. From Galatians we know that James, the brother of Jesus, was classed with the opponents of Paul, on the question how far Gentile converts had to conform to Jewish ritual before they could be received into the Christian Church. In this " epistle " there is no echo of the controversy; there is no hint that the question of circumcision, or of clean and unclean foods, or of sacred days, had any interest, or ever had had any interest, for writer or readers.

In this connection much has been made of the author's attitude to the facts of Jesus' ministry. James, the brother of Jesus, had shared his family's suspicion of, or hostility to, the work of Jesus (Mark iii. 21, 31–35); after His resurrection he had been granted a special appearance of the risen Christ (1 Cor. xv. 7) and had later become head of the Jerusalem Church. Could such a one have written even five chapters of Christian

teaching without referring to any incident of Jesus' life or to His death or resurrection? When Paul wanted an illustration of sacrificial giving, he turned to Jesus, who, though He was rich, yet for our sake became poor (2 Cor. viii. 9). When this writer wishes to point the moral of patient endurance of suffering, he finds his model not in Jesus but in the prophets and in Job (v. 10 f.). In any case, once we realise that this "epistle" has nothing to give us of that intimate knowledge of Jesus of which His brother James must have had so plentiful a store, the whole question of authorship becomes of secondary importance.

Perhaps the simplest way in which to get an insight into some of the problems of this "epistle" is to look at some of its more difficult and characteristic passages. In ii. 1 we have the curious phrase "the faith of" (or "in") "our Lord Jesus Christ of glory," which is as awkward in Greek as it is in English. It is hardly feasible to repeat (as do A.V. and R.V.) the phrase "the Lord" after "Christ," though this would give the expression which Paul applies to Jesus in 1 Cor. ii. 8: "the Lord of glory." We can take the phrase to mean "our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Shekinah" or visible presence of God (as in Acts vii. 2 Stephen calls God "the God of glory"). Attention has been called to the fact that the sentence would read more naturally without the reference to Jesus ("faith in our Lord of glory," that is, in God). As there is only one other direct reference to Jesus in the whole "epistle" (i. 1), it has even been suggested that it is not a Christian writing at all, but a Jewish document into which these two Christian references were subsequently introduced.

This is the only writing in the New Testament about which such a question could be seriously discussed.

The style and phraseology of the author, and the literature with which he was acquainted, all suggest that he had been in close touch with Jewish circles. The question of the origin of the evil tendency in man (i. 13 ff.) was one of the frequent subjects of discussion in the Jewish schools. Thus when James categorically asserts that God cannot be tempted to evil and so will tempt no human being to evil, he is apparently controverting a Jewish theory that, since God is the author of all things, the tendency to evil is also His creation, a theory which makes wrong-doing a misfortune rather than a sin. Further, while many of the maxims of James sound like reminiscences of sayings of Jesus (see especially the prohibition of oaths (v. 12)), it is astonishing how much of the language may be either Jewish or Christian. For example, the "synagogue" of ii. 2 might be either a Christian meeting or a Jewish place of meeting. To a Jew, the "coming of the Lord" (v. 7) would mean God's judgment day; to a Christian, the Return of Jesus.

On this subject the test passage is the much-discussed section ii. 14–26. It may well be that the relative importance of faith and obedience to the Law was discussed by Jews; the decisive point is that James quotes the exact phrases used by Paul in his teaching on justification, and that, so far as we know, no Jew before the time of Christ used, or could have used, these expressions. Both James (ii. 23) and Paul (Rom. iv. 3) quote Gen. xv. 6: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." For Paul this illustrates his argument that "a man is justified by faith apart from fulfilling the requirements of the Law" (Rom. iii. 28). James reaches exactly the opposite inference: "a man is justified by works

and not by faith alone " (ii. 24). He reaches this conclusion by a process that illustrates the way in which New Testament writers treat the Old Testament. The promise of Gen. xv. 6 had reference to the birth of a son to Abraham. James takes it rather of a promise of which he finds the fulfilment in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen. xxii. In his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham's faith found its fruition in a " work " (ii. 22).

It seems clear that both James and those whose theology he is confuting completely misunderstood the central article in Paul's teaching on faith. For Paul, " faith " meant the surrender of the soul to God through Jesus, crucified and risen ; for this writer " faith " is intellectual acceptance of a creed. For Paul, " works " meant fulfilment of the requirements of the Law, including especially its ritual requirements ; for James, " works " were simply Christian conduct, especially the kindly duties that spring from acceptance of the Christian law of love. What James is denouncing is not hypocrisy, but the mistaken idea that an orthodox creed and pious words are the whole duty of man. It may even be that those who told the shivering, starving wretches to " depart in peace, get warmed and fed " (ii. 15 f.) thought they were carrying out Jesus' own precepts about trust in God (Matt. vi. 25 ff.). In any case, it seems clear that this " epistle " is written in view of Pauline teaching, however misunderstood.

No really satisfactory explanation of the difficult verse ii. 18 seems to have been proposed. The objector seems to say : " You have faith and I have works," which is just the opposite of what we expect. The most likely supposition, though there is no manuscript

evidence for it, is that the objection of the imaginary interrupter has somehow fallen out, and that the passage originally ran : " After all, the supreme thing in Christianity is faith, and I have faith." Reply : " (You say that) you have faith and I have works. (Well then,) show me your faith without works, etc."

For various reasons, a few other passages are obscure to the modern reader. Thus i. 16–18, to which reference has already been made, seems to mean : " Do not imagine that any evil thing, such as temptation, can come from God. Make no mistake, my beloved brothers. Every gift (of God) is good, and all that He gives us is perfect ; it comes down from the Father of lights (that is, from the Creator of the heavenly bodies, from Him who is all light and in whom is no darkness at all), with whom is no variation caused by the turning of the shadow (that is, whose light is never obscured as the light of all the heavenly bodies is often obscured)." This meaning is obtained for the last clause by a slight change for which there is excellent manuscript authority. Again, the simile from the man looking at his face in a mirror (i. 23 f.) presumably depends on the fact that the mirrors of those days, being made of polished silver, copper, or tin, were apparently not very efficient. The contrast is between the glance at the perishable face, imperfectly seen and quickly forgotten, and the careful study of the perfect Law, preserved in the memory and carried out in the life.

Sometimes a reference to the Old Testament sheds light on a passage. In ii. 8 ff. the connection of thought seems to be as follows. After discussing the very different treatment accorded in the Church to a rich visitor and a poor one, the author takes up an excuse

apparently offered by those who toadied to the rich man: attention to him is required by the law of love. He reminds them very clearly that before the law of love (Lev. xix. 18) is another law against respect of persons (Lev. xix. 15). A breach of one commandment is a breach of the whole Law (James ii. 10). This was a point on which Jewish teachers had no unanimity. Some Rabbis would have agreed with James, but apparently the general tendency was to teach that the Sabbath law outweighed in importance all other laws, while it was also generally believed that God kept a kind of debit and credit account for each individual, his ultimate fate depending on the balance finally struck between good deeds and bad. But perhaps what James has in mind is that the King of the Kingdom has given new depth and scope to what he calls the Royal or Imperial Law of Love, so that, as Augustine said, every sin is a breach of the Christian law.

In the famous passage on the tongue, one sentence (iii. 6) is very obscure and the true text may have been lost. The general sense is clear: the tongue is a destructive fire, kindled by the flames of hell and in turn setting on fire the whole course of existence. But in what way does a fire "defile" the body; and what is the "wheel of existence" (or of "nature," or "becoming")? To the ancients a wheel was a mysterious contrivance, in the form of an endless line, always returning upon itself, and, except in the case of a locomotive, making no progress. Some ancient philosophers, like the modern Hindus, believed in an endless round of birth, death, and reincarnation for the individual; which round could be described by the phrase James uses, "the wheel of existence"; but this hardly seems to be what he has in mind.

" In many primitive rituals a wooden wheel is rapidly rotated on a wooden axle to produce fire. The image here is that of a flame spreading from the centre down all the radiating spokes " (Prof. J. H. Moulton).

In iv. 2 f. the correct punctuation seems to be : " You long for things, and do not get them ; (then) you commit murder. You covet and cannot attain (your desire) ; (then) you struggle and fight." He means that fighting and bloodshed are due to unsatisfied greed and ambition. There is a nobler way of attaining our ends, namely prayer ; but our prayers must be Christian prayers for Christian satisfactions.

In iv. 5 the correct reading seems to be : " Or do you suppose that is an idle word of Scripture : ' God jealously yearns over the (human) spirit which He made to dwell within us.' " It might conceivably mean : " The (Holy) Spirit which God made to dwell within us yearns jealously over us." If so, it is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in the " epistle." No such Scripture passage is known to us.

In iii. 1 the author classes himself with the " teachers " who played so prominent a part in the early Christian Church. He implies that there are many " teachers " in the churches, and that the office is a popular one, with many aspirants to it. (It may be that in much of what he says about sins of the " tongue " he is thinking primarily of the perils that lie in wait for the teacher, especially as controversialist.) This would imply that the Church was past the first stage of its development. On the other hand, the only other church officials mentioned are " elders " (v. 14). Jewish villages had their " elders " as well as Christian churches ; and if the " epistle " were as late as some would make it out to be, we would expect to hear

of bishops and deacons as well as of elders and teachers.

This " teacher " is far more anxious about the moral lessons he has to impart than about logical consistency. Thus in i. 26 he says that the religious profession of a man who does not bridle his tongue is meaningless self-deception ; yet in iii. 8 he tells us that, though the human race can bring and has brought into subjection the whole animal creation, yet the tongue no man can tame. As a teacher, his business is with wisdom. A whole class of Jewish literature centred round the conception of the Wisdom of God, which was sometimes practically personified. It is now recognised that Jesus made more use of this conception than was formerly supposed (Matt. xi. 28–30), and that the Wisdom of God was one of the categories under which the early Christians thought of Jesus (1 Cor. i. 24). The petition for wisdom in i. 5 might have come from a Jew, in contrast with Paul's deeply Christian prayer for wisdom for the Colossians (i. 9 ff.), but the assurance that the prayer will be answered by the God who gives without hesitation or stint is just the " ask and ye shall receive " of Jesus. James was far more than a social reformer or ethical teacher. In his famous definition of " religion, pure and undefiled " (i. 27), the word translated " religion " originally meant " cult " or " worship," and here perhaps is best translated " piety." James had no more respect than his Master for an orthodox creed that did not issue in a pious life, but he would not have allowed that humanitarian works exhaust religion. The " wisdom " of which he writes is a wisdom that cometh from above (iii. 15, 17).

We have, then, in this booklet various elements or

strata. Much of it might have been written by a pious Jew acquainted with the Jewish Wisdom literature. Every reader familiar with the Gospels will note what seem to be frequent reminiscences of the teaching of Jesus. These, however, are practically never given in the exact form with which we are familiar, and may sometimes represent teaching that Jesus gave in private before His public ministry began, teaching with which members of His family such as James were no doubt familiar. Other features of the " epistle " seem to imply a knowledge, more or less accurate, of the views of Paul. (For example, as James contrasts " doers " and " hearers " of the " word " (i. 22), so Paul contrasts " doers " and " hearers " of the " law " (Rom. ii. 13).)

These facts can be reconciled if we remember the nature of a Wisdom writing or a diatribe. Such books are not written at a sitting, but represent the garnered wisdom and thought of the writer's lifetime, and the experience of others before him. For example, a prologue to Ecclesiasticus, a book with which James was familiar, tells us that the wise sayings in it were partly composed, partly collected, by a Jesus whose grandson, Jesus son of Sirach, arranged them in their present order. The Epistle of James may well contain wise sayings composed or collected by a Jewish author before his conversion, reminiscences of the teaching of Jesus both before and after His baptism, and other maxims, composed or gathered by the author after he became a Christian and lived in a Christian atmosphere.

About the date, perhaps all we can say with confidence is that the writing does not belong to the earliest stage of the history of the Church.

THE EPISTLES OF PETER

1 PETER in its opening sentence plainly claims to be written by "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The reader naturally wishes to know why, in spite of this, many have gravely doubted, not only whether Peter wrote the letter, but even whether it was written in his generation. Except for those who hold a mechanical view of inspiration and of the Canon, the mere occurrence of Peter's name in the opening sentence does not absolutely foreclose the question of authorship. For centuries, among both Jews and Christians, the custom continued of issuing books under the assumed name of some distinguished leader of thought or action in the past. The writer's purpose in adopting such a nom-de-plume was, apparently, partly to do honour to the great man of the past whose name he assumed, partly to get the benefit of the prestige of his name. When inspiration was supposed to have ceased, men with a message had to take shelter under the wing of the inspired of a former generation. The custom of "pseudepigraphic writing," as it was called, seemed little more strange to the people of those days than it seems to us that Dickens should describe, in the first person, the experiences of the imaginary David Copperfield. The early Church had several documents that bore the name of Peter, but 1 Peter is the only one for which serious claims to genuineness are now made.

It is strange that the letter adds practically nothing to our knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus, but that is a feature which it has in common with all the rest of the New Testament, except the Gospels. If Peter wrote the letter, it is surprising that he says so little about himself and his own relation to Jesus. Apart

from the opening phrase there is nothing to identify the writer with Peter. He nowhere claims apostolic authority, and in v. 1 he calls himself a "fellow-presbyter" and a witness of the sufferings of Jesus (perhaps by his own sufferings), which latter phrase could have been used by hundreds of Christians.

While all this is true, it affords no serious argument against Peter as the author. Indeed the fact that so little is said of Peter strengthens the claim of the letter to authenticity. A writer composing an epistle in Peter's name long after Peter's death would surely have been at more pains to substantiate his claim. Nor is it easy to see how a Christian leader, anxious to encourage Christian congregations in the face of imminent persecution, could hope to get increased prestige for his letter by issuing it in Peter's name, if it were well known that Peter was long since dead. In contrast to James this epistle is steeped in Christian thought, and is one of the most beautiful and inspiring writings even in the New Testament.

According to the tradition, Peter used an interpreter when he spoke in Greek, yet this letter is written in good Greek. Some have thought also that they detected in 1 Peter a far stronger Pauline influence than we should expect in a work of Peter. We note that, according to v. 12, the letter was written "through Silvanus." This may very well mean that Silvanus was much more than an amanuensis. Silvanus, presumably the same person as Silas, was a man of authority in the Christian community at Jerusalem, a prophet or inspired Christian preacher and companion of Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts xv. 22, 32, 40). He was associated with Paul in the composition of both Thessalonian epistles (i. 1) and

in the founding of the Corinthian Church (2 Cor. i. 19). He must have known both Peter and Mark in Jerusalem and may well have been with them both in Rome years later. If this Silas had a large share in the composition of the epistle, it would explain many things otherwise not very intelligible.

Other personal references in the last paragraph would be appropriate as coming from Peter. As "the children of your elect sister" (2 John 13) seems to mean "the members of the sister church," so "the fellow-elect" (fem.) (v. 13) presumably means "the sister church" (as in Rev. xxi. 9 the Church is "the Lamb's Bride"). The (spiritual) Babylon is Rome (as in Rev. xvii. 5). In that case the letter was sent from Rome, as the Gospel of Mark is also believed to have emanated from Rome. Mark is called the author's (spiritual) son; and we remember that Peter had known Mark as a youth (Acts xii. 12 ff.), that Mark was interested in the Asiatic churches to which this epistle is addressed (Col. iv. 10), and that, according to tradition, the second Gospel contains Mark's account of the story of Jesus as he heard it from the lips of Peter.

The parallels between this document and other New Testament writings seem to point to the rise of a common Christian vocabulary and common Christian ideas in the scattered communities of the Church. From this point of view, the most remarkable passage is that beginning ii. 4. Here we have a series of quotations from the Old Testament, of which no less than three are found in Romans ix. These are the passages; the corner-stone in Zion (Isa. xxviii. 16), the stone of stumbling (Isa. viii. 14), and those who formerly were not God's people but who are now to be called God's people (Hos. ii. 23). Presumably both writers are

quoting from a collection of Testimonies, or Scripture proof passages from the Old Testament, such as Christians seem to have used from the earliest times. (The classical passage on the spiritual temple with Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone is Eph. ii. 20–2.) The quotation in v. 4 about the stone rejected by men (Ps. cxviii. 22) had been used by Jesus Himself in the parable of the wicked vinedressers. In this passage Peter calls Jesus the " stone of life " (ii. 4, compare " bread of life," " water of life ") and rises to the great thought that the followers of Jesus are to be " stones of life," forming a living temple of God. Jesus Christ is the foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11), but Peter, the Rock (or Peter's great confession) was also the rock foundation of the Church (Matt. xvi. 18). Peter's faithlessness had made him a stumbling-block (Matt. xvi. 23) and now Jesus Himself becomes, in the words of Isa. viii. 14, a " rock of stumbling " (1 Pet. ii. 8).

One of the most interesting things in this letter is the glimpse it gives into the life of the Christian communities at the period when it was becoming clear that " the world's friendship means enmity to God." The chief object of the letter was to encourage Christians in the sufferings their Christian profession was bringing upon them and seemed likely to bring upon them. There are repeated references to suffering throughout the epistle (cf. i. 7 ; ii. 19 ; iii. 14 ; iv. 12 ; iv. 19). The readers have only recently been subjected to a fiery trial (iv. 12). Not only so, the Christian brotherhood throughout the world is " paying a tax of suffering " (v. 9). We know something of three great persecutions in the early days of the Church ; and if we could only locate the particular persecution to which this letter refers, it would throw on it a very interesting light.

Christians were being frequently called on to defend their faith (iii. 15), were to be always ready to explain their position to those who asked of them an exposition of their "hope"; they were being accused of evil living (ii. 12; when they held their meetings at night as they sometimes had to do, such charges would easily arise, especially as the Christians inherited much of the unpopularity of the Jews). They were being assailed with threats (iii. 14) and the very uprightness of their lives was being defamed (iii. 16). One reason for the unpopularity of the Christians is shown by a verse like iv. 4. They were very uncomfortable neighbours, always finding moral problems where others could see none. Their acquaintances are amazed and take it very ill that they will no longer *run* with them to the old profligate life.

The author was one of those heroic souls who helped to establish for all time the position that to be a Christian is in the first place to be a good man. He tried to comfort his readers in various ways, but his great anxiety was that, whatever charges might be brought against them, no true accusation could ever be brought (iv. 15). The last word in this sentence seems to mean literally "too much interested in other people's affairs." It may have been applied to Christians as proselytisers, or as social nuisances who split families and protested against popular customs; or it may mean political revolutionaries.

We note, however, that there is no talk of martyrs; and either the persecution was not so severe as that which called forth the Revelation, or Peter reacted differently from the author of the Revelation; for, as in the case of Paul, there is no suggestion whatever of opposition to, or feeling against, the established authori-

ties. (Cf. Rom. xiii. 1 ff., with 1 Pet. ii. 13 ff.) The Christian profession must be responsible for no kind of social, civil, or domestic disorder ((ii. 13—iii. 22); advice which in practice seems to have thoroughly justified itself. The revolutionary power of Christianity was to work like leaven, not like dynamite; and it did.

While, then, we have a fairly accurate idea of the situation of the readers, the evidence is not sufficient to enable us to point with certainty to any known persecution. According to an ancient tradition, the truth of which there seems no reason to doubt, Peter was martyred in Nero's persecution of the Christians in Rome, in or shortly after the year 64. We do not know that this persecution directly affected the Christians north of the Taurus in Asia Minor, to whom this letter is addressed, but it may have had far-reaching effects.

2 PETER is much more insistent on its claim to be by the apostle Peter than is 1 Peter. Not only does the author describe himself as "Simon (or Symeon) Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ" (i. 1), but (i. 16 ff.) he claims to have been an eye-witness of the Transfiguration, and an ear-witness of the Divine voice that accompanied it. He further tells us that the Lord has revealed to him that he is "to put off his tabernacle soon" (i. 14), which looks like a reference to the well-known story in John xxi. 18 f., while his promise (i. 15) to leave behind him a memorial of Christian teaching may well be a reference to the very ancient tradition, recorded by Papias, that Mark's Gospel contains the story of Jesus' ministry as told by Peter.

There is, however, excellent reason for classing this

" letter " among the " pseudepigraphical " writings mentioned above ; and as it adds nothing to our knowledge of the historical Jesus, and little to our appreciation of Christian truth, fortunately the question of authorship is unimportant.

There are many indications that 2 Peter is one of the latest books in the New Testament, perhaps the very latest. The conception (i. 4) that the end of religion is that men should escape from a world of decay, a decay for which evil desire is responsible, and become participators in the Divine nature, suggests the atmosphere of the later philosophical Christianity that gave us the creeds rather than the outlook of a converted fisherman. The idea is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Again, if Jesus Christ is called " our God " (i. 1), and this seems the natural translation of the phrase, it was a way of speaking unfamiliar to the first generation of Christians, as the New Testament witnesses. That such titles were applied to Jesus in deliberate opposition to the claims of less worthy rivals is illustrated by an inscription found at Ephesus, in which, during his lifetime, Julius Cæsar was acclaimed as " the god . . . who has appeared [the verb of the noun " epiphany "], the universal saviour of the life of men." [1]

A doxology ascribed to Jesus alone (iii. 18) is rare in the New Testament, while nowhere else in the New Testament or the Apostolic Fathers is the kingdom called " the eternal kingdom " (i. 11). Also, the tendency to think of " faith " as a body of doctrine rather than an exercise of soul (i. 1), to regard Christianity as a " holy commandment " to be obeyed (ii. 21 ; iii. 2), and to stress gnōsis (higher knowledge) or

[1] Quoted in Kennedy, *Theology of the Epistles*, p. 252.

the intellectual side of religion, suggests that we are no longer in the atmosphere of the first generation of Christians.

The occasion of the "epistle" is that heretics by their teaching were proving a serious menace to the Church. We are not quite sure whether the "false teachers" of chapter ii. are the same as the mockers of chapter iii.; but it is simplest to assume that they are. It is difficult to get any precise idea of the nature of the heresy attacked. Two points, however, are clear. Heresy cases in modern times centre round matters of creed or worship, and seldom have any reference to the Christian life. The early Christians followed their Master in judging any creed by its fruits, and this writer emphasises the immoral conduct which was apparently the natural sequel of the false teaching. The other point is that the unexpected delay in the Second Coming of Jesus was being used by the heretics to discredit the whole theological system of those who still expected the Christ to return. Faced with the same problem, perhaps about the same time, the author of the fourth Gospel gives as the solution the doctrine of the indwelling Christ. Eternal life is not a future inheritance, but a present and abiding possession. To know God and His messenger, Jesus Christ, this *is* eternal life. The author of 2 Peter adopts the other solution. However much delayed, the Second Coming and the end of the world, interpreted quite literally, shall certainly take place.

Much of this "epistle," especially in chapter ii., is parallel to Jude. It seems likely that Jude was the earlier writer and that Peter was the borrower. This seems probable in itself, and there are indications that where the two differ it is Peter who is revising

Jude. Both give three ancient illustrations of the certainty of the judgment of God (2 Pet. ii. 4 ff. ; Jude 5, 7) ; but while both give the fallen angels and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, as the third example Jude gives the generation that perished in the wilderness, while Peter chooses rather the flood story. Moreover, Peter adds two illustrations of the truth that God's judgment is redemptive as well as destructive ; namely, the rescue of Noah, who in Jewish tradition had become " a preacher of righteousness," and righteous Lot.

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

All three " epistles of John " are really anonymous. 1 John and Hebrews, alone of the New Testament writings, give no indication of the author. 2 and 3 John are sent by " the presbyter," which has led some to think that they are the work of the " presbyter John," if indeed such a person ever existed.

From very early times, the three letters have been connected with each other and with the fourth Gospel. Any reader can test for himself the extent to which the second epistle reproduces the first. Much more important is the very close connection between the first epistle and the Gospel. It is not only that many features of the epistle are familiar to readers of the Gospel, such as " walking in darkness," " doing the truth," " abiding in Him," being " of the world," the emphasis on the " new commandment " of love, and the use of the words " murderer " and " liar." The whole conception of God and of the Gospel is the same in Gospel and epistle. The author's readiness to think of God in philosophical terms as " light " and

as " life " takes us into a somewhat different atmosphere from that we breathe in the parables of Jesus where God is compared to the loving father of the prodigal or to a merciful creditor. There is fairly general agreement that all four documents come from the pen of a great Christian leader and thinker (whether John the apostle is not certain) in Ephesus about the end of the first century.

1 JOHN takes a foremost place in the library of devotional literature. While the world lasts, such sayings as : " behold, what manner of love . . . " (iii. 1), " God is love " (iv. 8), " perfect love casteth out fear " (iv. 18), and " we love, because He first loved us " (iv. 19) will be among the most cherished treasures of the Church. The very aim of the letter was that readers and author might join in a circle of loving fellowship with the Father and the Son (i. 3).

Yet it seems clear that the epistle was written partly with a controversial purpose. The opening verses in which the writer vehemently asserts that the Christ who is the centre of His Gospel had existed on the earth in a visible, audible, and tangible manner would be meaningless unless he had in view men who taught otherwise.

Why should anyone be concerned to deny the bodily existence of Jesus Christ ? Under the influence of Eastern religious teaching and Western philosophy, a school of thought had arisen, and was trying to mould the thought of the Christian Church, that set up a false opposition between God and man, between flesh and spirit. The argument was that if the Christ belonged to the Divine side of the universe, He could not also belong to the human side ; if He belonged to the realm of spirit, He could not also belong to the

realm of flesh. The incarnation was therefore impossible. One form of this teaching was that Jesus lived a human life till His baptism, when the Divine Christ came upon Him ; the rest of the Gospel history is the story not of the real Jesus, but of this supernatural Christ, who left Jesus just before the crucifixion so that it was the human Jesus that died.

Can we infer, from the contents of the letter, something more about these " false teachers " ? That they did set up as teachers is clear from ii. 27. The author replies that the true Christian who has been " anointed " by Christ (a play on the word Christ = anointed) needs no other teacher (though the fact that he troubles to write this letter suggests that an older and more experienced Christian may help younger disciples in interpreting the Divine message). One of their favourite claims was " We know Him " (ii. 4) ; and it was from this claim that they received the name by which they were known in later times, " Gnostics " (men of gnōsis or knowledge). They professed to be " in the light " (ii. 9), and to " abide in God " (ii. 24). Salvation was therefore meant only for the small coterie of privileged persons to which they belonged. To this the writer rejoins that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (ii. 2).

As we have seen, they separated the human Jesus from the Divine Christ (ii. 22), thus not only disrupting the personality of Jesus, but making impossible the revelation of God that the Christian believed he found in Jesus. On this account the writer finds in them the " antichrist " (ii. 18 ; iv. 3). This word, which in the New Testament occurs only in the epistles of John, indicates a being expected by the Christians to arise in the last days, and to sum up in himself the

forces of evil that opposed the righteous God. Apparently these opponents are in view in the curious passage (v. 6) in which the writer insists that Jesus Christ came, " not by the water only, but by the water and the blood." These Gnostics allowed that the Christ came by " the water," came to Jesus in His baptism ; but denied that He came by " the blood " ; for according to them it was not the Christ, but the human Jesus that was crucified. Yet it may be that the writer is thinking of events in Christian experience, rather than of incidents in the life of Jesus. We must not only have the baptismal experience of regeneration, but must also share in the death of our Lord if we are to share in His resurrection.

An important part of the claim of the " false teachers " was that they were " free from sin " (i. 8). Their argument seems to have been that sin resided in the flesh ; therefore, since they had passed from the realm of flesh to the realm of spirit, sin was to them a matter of indifference. This line of reasoning might lead, and, in different groups of the school, actually did lead, to fundamentally different conclusions. One set of Gnostics argued that, since the Christian was delivered from the flesh, the flesh must no more have dominion over him : he must become an ascetic. Others drew the contrary inference that sin was a matter of indifference to the Christian. (See the charges brought against the Nicolaitans in Rev. ii.)

The claim to sinlessness would not in itself have shocked the writer, since he makes the same claim for himself and his followers. The point was that his opponents, who professed to be sinless, were denying the incarnation of God in Jesus, which alone made sinlessness possible, and were therefore depriving

themselves of the propitiatory power of the death of Jesus (ii. 1, 2). Thus they were "walking in darkness" (i. 6).

To all this the writer replied, as the Christian Church has so often replied to the attacks of its enemies, partly by accepting some of the positions of his opponents and giving them a Christian turn. There are indeed, he says, two spheres of existence, fundamentally opposed; but the antithesis is not between matter and spirit: rather it is between light and darkness (i. 5; this suggests a favourite idea in the Zoroastrian religion), between God and the devil (iii. 8, 10), between truth and lies (ii. 21, 22). There are things in the world that draw men's hearts away from God (ii. 16); not simply, however, because they are material things, but because they belong to the evanescent side of the universe, as contrasted with the deathlessness of him who does God's will (ii. 17). Even among human beings, some are on one side, some on the other; some as children of God, some children of the devil (v. 19).

The Gnostics claimed that they had within them a "Divine seed." The author makes the counter-claim that every child of God has a Divine seed (iii. 9); and goes on boldly to deduce that he is therefore not only sinless, but incapable of sin. John does not paint as black a picture of the moral life of the Gnostics as is painted elsewhere; but he has evidently felt keenly their unloving and unbrotherly conduct throughout the dispute. There has been a schism, and the Gnostics have left the fellowship (ii. 19), which, in the writer's opinion, is a sufficient proof that they had never truly belonged to it. For it is an essential part of His teaching that all who are true members of the Church are eternally safe (ii. 19; iv. 17; v. 18).

John's conception of the absolute fearlessness of the Christian was no doubt meant to counterbalance the self-confidence of the Gnostics. Yet it is not a pose, but the outcome of a genuine Christian experience, such as called forth Paul's " Who shall separate us ? " In his contention that the Christian cannot sin, many of the most trusted teachers of the Church have not followed him (iii. 9 ; v. 18). Yet he is well aware that the Christian needs forgiveness (ii. 1, 2) and that there are sins which are " not unto death " (v. 16, 17). The point is that the Christian cannot commit " mortal sin," the sin of definitely and finally turning his back on God revealed in Jesus, and on all that Jesus stands for.

One reason he gives for the bold front with which the Christian meets his God, in spite of much knowledge of sin in his heart, would, if the Church had laid the teaching to heart, have introduced a healthier note into much gloomily introspective writing on the confession of sin. " Even if our heart does condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows everything " (iii. 20), knows our temptations, knows also that, in spite of our temptations, our hearts are facing the right way.

In one other point John accepts Gnostic teaching, namely in his emphasis on knowledge, an emphasis that strikes one as being somewhat at variance with the teaching of Jesus and of Paul. " You all have knowledge," he says (ii. 20). He uses the verb " to know " repeatedly throughout the epistle, and concludes it with a threefold " we know " (v. 18, 19, 20). In the fourth Gospel and the three epistles the word " faith " is used only once (1 John v. 4). For this writer salvation comes through belief (iv. 2). It is true that the knowledge the writer has in mind is no

mere affair of the intellect, but a knowledge that involves the surrender of the whole person. Yet there is some truth in the statement that it was about this time that a correct creed began to have that pre-eminent place in the thought of the Church which, while conserving much that was valuable, has been responsible for no little unbrotherliness and for many a schism.

2 JOHN is a pastoral letter addressed by "the presbyter" (or "elder") to "the elect lady" (or it might be "the Lady Electa") and her children. Some have supposed that the recipient of the letter is an actual lady; but as the singular number used in the opening verses in reference to her later gives place to the plural, and as we know that the Church came to be described as "the bride" of Christ (Rev. xix. 7), it has usually been supposed that the elect lady is a church over whom the writer had some authority. It was within the circle of churches that he visited, and he was about to pay one of his (periodical ?) visits (ver. 12). The situation and the teaching are practically the same as in 1 John. Only some of the children (church-members) are living true lives (ver. 4). Travelling teachers are invading the church with the "advanced" teaching (ver. 9) that "Jesus Christ has not come in the flesh." These are deceivers and antichrists (ver. 7). When the writer urges the church to give no hospitality or greetings to such teachers, we must remember that the congregations of those days met in the houses of Christians; so that to receive a teacher into one's house meant practically to receive him into the church.

3 JOHN is a letter proper as opposed to one of the more formidable epistles. Its chief interest for us is the insight it gives us into the church life of a

period of which we know extremely little. It is addressed by "the presbyter" to Gaius, who was apparently one of his chief friends in a church at some distance over whom the presbyter claimed some authority. Gaius and his party acknowledged that authority, and, when messengers came from the presbyter, treated them most hospitably. But there was another party in this local church, led by Diotrephes, who resented the interference of the presbyter, refused to receive his messengers, and excommunicated members of the party favourable to the presbyter's claims. The author represents Diotrephes as an ambitious man, whose attacks on the authority of the presbyter were mischievous babbling (vv. 9, 10).

In most of the controversies of New Testament times, we have only one side of the story. In this case we could wish to have had at first hand the point of view of Diotrephes. He was apparently a local leader who objected to the church being kept in leading strings by one who only visited it occasionally, and he was strong enough to turn the presbyter's party out of the church. It has been suggested, with much probability, that the incident illuminates a situation which must have recurred in many local churches as they grew in numbers and in intellectual and spiritual power. At first the missionary founder of the church would have much prestige and a certain amount of authority. This authority would gradually pass to the local presbyters, and finally to one of them who came to be known as "the bishop." The presbyter may have been right in his estimate of the unchristian methods and language of Diotrephes. It does not follow that Diotrephes was wrong in his main contention, that the time had come when the chief responsibility

must be devolved by the missionary founder of the church on the local leader or leaders. The letter seems to have been sent by Demetrius (ver. 12).

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

This letter is written by Jude, " brother of James," which suggests that James was the better known. These were two of the commonest Jewish and early Christian names. The writing, which is not very important in itself, doubtless owes its preservation largely to the belief that its author was a brother of Jesus. If he was, it is curious that he does not make this claim. Of the writer, we have no certain knowledge.

The letter has been recognised as Scripture at least since the end of the fourth century ; though even then many continued to reject its claim to a place in the canon, on the ground that it quoted the Book of Enoch, which was not one of the canonical Scriptures. (Genesis vi. 1–4 tells of unions between the sons of God and the daughters of men, the offspring of which unions were mighty men, men of renown. Jewish imagination worked on this fragment of ancient tradition, and it plays a large part in the literature known as the Book of Enoch. This book teaches that demons are the spirits that proceed from the souls of the giants who resulted from the unnatural unions between the fallen angels and human women. The epistle quotes also another apocryphal book known as the Assumption of Moses, in which the story is told that Michael was commissioned to bury Moses. Satan claimed the body on the ground that he was the lord of matter. Instead of reviling him, Michael simply replied : " The

Lord rebuke thee.") It is not in accordance with modern ideas to reject a book simply because it quotes writings which were not ultimately received into the canon.

Jude tells his readers that he was about to send them a devotional study on " our common salvation," when an outbreak in the church of a heresy similar to that attacked in 1 John compelled him to suspend his purpose and give them teaching which would help them to defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints. His chief anxiety was that the centrality of Jesus and Christian morality were both in danger (ver. 4). The epistle is so like 2 Peter (especially ch. 2) that the author of one of them must have had the other in front of him. (See 2 Peter.) He quotes the examples of the desert generation, the angels who left their proper abode, and Sodom and Gomorrah, to show that iniquity will not go unpunished. The false teachers are guilty of the murderous godlessness of Cain, the greedy disloyalty of Balaam, and the jealous disobedience of Korah. The benediction is among the finest things in the New Testament, and must be read in close conjunction with the theme of the epistle.

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